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THE
LOUIS BROMFIELD
TRILOGY

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THE GREEN BAY TREE

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EARLY AUTUMN

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THE GREEN BAY TREE • POSSESSION
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BLUE RIBBON BOOKS

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THE
LOUIS BROMFIELD

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THE GREEN BAY TREE

BY J. M. T. T.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. M. T. T.

AND A FOREWORD BY J. M. T. T.

NEW YORK: J. M. T. T.

TO
MY MOTHER,
WHO MUST HAVE KNOWN
AT SOME TIME IN HER LIFE
HATTIE TOLLIVER

"Life is hard for our children. It isn't as simple as it was for us. Their grandfathers were pioneers and the same blood runs in their veins, only they haven't a frontier any longer. They stand . . . these children of ours . . . with their backs toward this rough-hewn middle west and their faces set toward Europe and the East and they belong to neither. They are lost somewhere between."

"Every one of us is different from the others. There are no two in the least alike and no one ever really knows any one else. There is always a part which remains secret and hidden, concealed in the deepest part of the soul. No husband ever knows his wife and no wife ever really knows her husband. There is always something just beyond that remains aloof and untouched, mysterious and undiscoverable, because we ourselves do not know just what it is. Sometimes it is shameful. Sometimes it is too fine, too precious, ever to reveal. It is quite beyond revelation even if we chose to reveal it."

THE GREEN BAY TREE

I

IF you can picture a little park, bright for the moment with the flush of early summer flowers and peopled with men and women in the costumes of the late nineties—If you can picture such a park set down in the midst of an inferno of fire, steel and smoke, there is no need to describe Cypress Hill on the afternoon of the garden party for the Governor. It was a large garden, indeed quite worthy of the name "park," withdrawn and shut in by high walls of arbor vitæ clipped at intervals into small niches which sheltered bits of white statuary, some genuine, some of them copies. The Venus of Cydnos was there (in copy to be sure), and of course the Apollo Belvedere, a favorite ornament of formal gardens, as well as the Samothrace Victory dashing forward, it seemed, to soar high above the cloud of smoke from the neighboring blast furnaces.

Here and there the hedge displayed signs of death. There were patches where the green had become withered, and other patches where there was no green at all but simply a tangled wall of hard, dead twigs. Where death had touched the barrier it was possible to see beyond the borders of the garden into regions filled with roaring furnaces, steel sheds, and a tangle of glittering railway tracks cluttered by a confusion of semaphores and signal lights which the magic of night transformed into festoons of glowing jewels—emeralds, rubies, cabuchons, opals, glowing in the thick darkness. But it was not yet dark and no one at the garden party peered through the dying gaps in the hedge because by daylight there lay beyond the borders of the garden only ugliness of the most appalling nature.

The little park sloped away on all sides from a great brick house, conceived in the most bizarre union of Georgian and Gothic styles. It was large and square and faced with white stone, but beyond this the Georgian style played no part. The roof carried a half-dozen high pitched gables; the windows were tall and pointed in the manner of a church rectory, and the chimneys, built of white stone, were carved in the most ornate Gothic fashion. Over all clambered a mass of vines,—woodbine, virginia creeper and wistaria—which somehow bound the grotesque combination of styles into one harmonious whole, characterized by a surprising look of age, considering the fact that the house stood in the midst of a community which less than a century before had been a complete and trackless wilderness.

The vines, like the hedge, had been more green and exotic at some earlier day. In places there were now no leaves at all, and elsewhere, though the season was early summer, the leaves appeared sickly and wretched, surrounded by dead bare tendrils pressing desperately against the faded bricks.

On the whole, however, the garden was at its best. Along the gravel walks leading to the arbor, irises raised crowns of mauve, royal purple and yellow. Peonies in the process of bursting from tight green buds into great pom-poms of pink and white tumbled across the flagged walk. At the feet of the flying Eros (made of cast iron and painted white), who carried a ring in one hand and thus served for a hitching post, ground pinks and white violets, brought from England by Julia Shane's grandmother, peeped from among the blades of new grass. But the greatest splendor had its being in the wistaria. High up among the branches of the dead oak that towered gauntly above the horse block, its cascades of mauve and white and purple poured like water escaping from a broken dam. From the black iron portico tumbled more torrents of blossoms. They appeared even high up among the tips of the pointed cypresses which gave the house its name. To be sure these were not true cypresses at all, for true cypresses could not have survived the harsh northern winter. In reality they were cedars; but their tall, green-black spires, swaying in melancholy fashion at the least breath of air, resembled

cypresses as one brother resembles another. John Shane, perhaps because the name roused memories of some secret world of his own, always called them cypresses and such, to all purposes, they had become. None knew why he called the house Cypress Hill or why he loved cypresses so much that he called cedars by that name when nature cheated him out of his heart's desire. The Town set it down simply as another of his eccentricities. One more craziness no longer disturbed the Town. And John Shane had been dead now for more than ten years, so perhaps the matter was one of no importance whatever.

Under the wistarias on the wrought iron piazza his widow, Julia Shane, leaning on her stick of ebony filigreed in silver, surveyed the bright garden and the guests who moved about among the old trees, the men clad in sober black, the ladies in sprigged muslins or bright colored linens. She was a tall thin woman with a nose slightly hooked, which gave her the fleeting look of an eagle, courageous, bold, even a little pitiless and unrelenting. An air of dignity and distinction compensated the deficiencies of beauty; she was certainly not a beautiful woman and her fine skin was already crisscrossed by a million tiny lines no more substantial than cobweb. Like the women of the generation preceding hers, she made no attempt at preserving the illusion of youth. Although she could not have been long past middle age, she dressed as an old woman. She wore a gown of black and mauve of the most expensive materials, —a sign of mourning which she kept up for a husband dead ten years, a husband whose passing could have given her no cause for regret, whose memory could not possibly bring to her ivory cheeks the faintest flush of pleasure. But the black and mauve gave her great dignity and a certain melancholy beauty. On her thin fingers she wore rings set with amethysts and diamonds and about her neck hung a chain of amethysts caught in a setting of old Spanish silver. The chain reached twice about her thin throat and hung to the knees.

She had been standing on the piazza, a little withdrawn from her guests, all the afternoon because she knew that the mauve of her gown and the dull lavender sparkle of the amethysts blended superbly with the tumbling blossoms of the wistaria.

She had not been, after all, the wife of John Shane for nothing. People said that he had taught his wife to make the best of herself because he could bear to have about him only those things which were in excellent taste. People also said that his wife was lame, not because she had fallen by accident down the long polished stairway, but because she had been thrown from the top to the bottom by her husband in an insane fit of rage.

From her point of vantage, her bright blue eyes swept the garden, identifying the guests—those whom she desired to have there, those to whose presence she was completely indifferent, and those whom political necessity had forced upon her. About most of them centered scornful, bitter, little thoughts that chased themselves round and round her tired brain.

Over against the hedge on the far side of the little pavilion stood a group which, it appeared, interested her more than any other, for she watched it with a faint smile that carried the merest trace of mockery. She discerned the black of the bombazine worn by Hattie Tolliver, her blood niece, and the sprigged muslin of Hattie's daughter, Ellen, who stood by resentfully with an air of the most profound scorn while her mother talked to Judge Weissman. The mother talked volubly, exerting all her power to charm the Judge, a fat perspiring Oriental and the son of an immigrant Viennese Jew. And the efforts of Hattie Tolliver, so solid, so respectable, so downright, were completely transparent, for the woman possessed no trace of subtlety, not the faintest power of dissimulation. She sought to win favor with the Jew because he was the one power in the county politics. He ruled his party with an undisputed sway, and Hattie Tolliver's husband was a candidate for office. Perhaps from the pinnacle of her worldliness Julia Shane detected a quality naive and almost comic in the vulgar intrigue progressing so blatantly on the opposite side of the pavilion.

There was also a quality indescribably comic in the fierce attitude of the daughter, in her aloofness from the politician and the intensity of her glowering expression. She was an obnoxious child of sixteen, wilful, spoiled, savage, but beyond the possibility of denial, she played the piano superbly, in a truly extraordinary fashion.

Presently Julia Shane, behind the shelter of the wistaria, sniffed suddenly as though the wind had carried to her among the delicate odors of the flowers the offensive smell of the fat perspiring Jew. He was there by political necessity, because the Governor desired his presence. Clearly she looked upon him as an intruder who defiled the little park.

Farther off at the side of the empty kennels, all buried beneath a tangle of vines, another group had gathered about a table where pink ices and pink and white cakes were being served. About the great silver punch bowl hung a dozen men, drinking, drinking, drinking, as though the little park were a corner saloon and the little table the accustomed free lunch. For a moment Julia Shane's gaze fastened upon the men and her thin nostrils quivered. Her lips formed themselves to utter a word which she spoke quite loudly so that three women, perfect strangers to her who stood just beneath the piazza, overheard it and spread the story that Julia Shane had taken to talking to herself. "Pigs!" she said.

II

IN other parts of the garden the bright parasols of the gossiping women raised themselves in little clumps like mushrooms appearing unexpectedly through the green of a wide lawn. The Governor was nowhere to be seen, nor Lily nor Irene, Julia Shane's two daughters.

The guests began to depart. A victoria with a driver on the box came round the corner of the old house. A fat dowager, dressed in purple and wearing a gold chain, bowed, and the diminutive young man beside her, in a very tight coat and a derby hat, smiled politely—very politely—Mrs. Julis Harrison and her son Willie, of the great family which owned the Mills.

Julia Shane bowed slightly and leaned more heavily upon her ebony stick. A second vehicle appeared, this time a high buggy which bore the county auditor and his wife . . . common people who never before had entered the wrought iron gates of Cypress Hill. The fat and blowsy wife bowed in an exaggerated fashion, never stopping the while to fan her red face vigorously until she discovered that her elaborate bows were expended upon the back of Julia Shane, who had become suddenly absorbed in the rings that glittered on her bony fingers. The smile froze on the fat lady's face and her heavy lips pursed themselves to utter with a savage intensity of feeling the word "Snob!" Indeed, her indignation so mounted under the protests of her tipsy husband, that a moment later she altered the epithet to another more vulgar and more powerful phrase. "Old Slut!" she said aloud. The two carriages made their way down the long avenue between the rows of dying Norway spruce to the gate where Hennerly, the black servant, stood on guard.

Outside, with faces pressed against the bars, stood a score of aliens from the hovels of the mill workers in the neighboring Flats. The little group included a dozen women wearing

shawls and a multitude of petticoats, three or four children and as many half-grown boys still a year or two too young to be of any use to the Harrison Mills. They pushed and pressed against the handsome gates, striving for a glimpse at the spectacle of the bright garden animated by the figures of the men and women who ruled the Town, the Flats, the very lives and destinies of the little throng of aliens. A baby squalled in the heat and one of the boys, a tall powerful fellow with a shock of yellow hair, spat through the bars.

At the approach of the carriage the black Hennerly sprang up and with the gesture of one opening the gates of Buckingham Palace, shouted to the crowd outside, "Look out, you all! There's carriages a-coming!"

Then with a great clanging and shooting of bolts he swung open the gates and Mrs. Julis Harrison and her son William swept through. The hoofs of the dancing horses beat a tattoo on the cobblestones. The mother saw nothing, but the narrow eyes of her son appraised the group of boys and even the babies as potential workers in the Mills. These Dago children grew rapidly, but not fast enough to keep pace with the needs of the growing furnaces; and so many of them died before they reached manhood.

As the carriage swung into narrow Halsted Street, Mrs. Harrison, leaning forward so that the gold chain swayed like a pendulum from her mountainous bosom, surveyed the wretched houses, the yards bereft of all green, and the shabby railway station that stood a hundred yards from the very gates of Shane's Castle.

"You'd think Julia Shane would move out of this filthy district," she said. "Sentiment is all right, but there's such a thing as running it into the ground. The smoke and soot is even killing the flowers. They're not half so fine as last year."

Her son William shrugged his narrow, sloping shoulders.

"The ground is worth its weight in gold," he said. "Three railroads—the only site left. She could get her own price."

In the corner saloon a mechanical piano set up a tinny uproar and shattered fragments of The Blue Danube drifted out upon the hot air through the swinging doors into the street, throttling for the moment any further conversation.

The county auditor and his wife drove uncertainly through the gates, for the county auditor had drunk too much and failed to understand that horses driven with crossed reins do not respond according to any preconceived plan. His wife, her face red as a ripe tomato, took them from him and swore.

"She needn't think she's so damned swell," she said. "What's she got to make her so proud? I should think she'd blush at what has happened in that rotten old house. Why, she's got nothing but Hunkies and Dagos for neighbors!"

She cut the horses across the back, dashed forward, and passed the victoria of Mrs. Harrison and her son William at a triumphant gallop.

With a loud, officious bang, Hennery closed the wrought iron gates and the wise, old faces of the alien women pressed once more against the bars. One of the throng—the big boy with the shock of yellow hair, a Ukrainian named Stepan Krylenko—shouted something in Russian as the gates banged together. It was a tongue foreign to Hennery but from the look in the fierce blue eye of the young fellow, the negro understood that what he said was not friendly. The women admonished the boy and fell to whispering in awe among themselves, but the offender in no way modified his manner. When Judge Weissman, fat and perspiring and covered with jewelry, whirled past him in a phaeton a moment later, the boy shouted in Russian, "Jew! Dirty Jew!" Judge Weissman regarded the boy with his pop eyes, wiped his mahogany face and muttered to his companion, Lawyer Briggs, "These foreigners are getting too free in their manners. . . . The Harrisons will have trouble at the Mills one of these days. . . . There ought to be a law against letting them into the country."

The Judge was angry, although his anger was stirred not by the shout of Stepan Krylenko but by the fact that Julia Shane had become suddenly blind as his phaeton swept round the corner of the old house. The shout was something upon which to fasten his anger.

III

FROM her point of vantage on the wistaria clad piazza, the old woman watched the little drama at the entrance to the Park, and when the gates had been flung closed once more, she moved back into the cool shadows, still wondering where Lily and Irene and the Governor could have hidden themselves. She settled herself on an iron bench, praying that no one would pass to disturb her, and at the same moment the sound of sobbing reached her ears. It came from the inside of the house, from the library just beyond the tall window. There, in a corner beyond the great silver mounted globe, Irene had flung herself down and was weeping. The half-suppressed sobs shook the girl's frail body. Her muslin dress with the blue sash was crushed and damp. The mother bent over her and drew the girl into a sitting posture against the brocade of the rosewood sofa.

"Come, Irene," said the old woman. "It is no time for tears. There is time enough when this infernal crowd is gone. What is it? What has come over you since yesterday?"

The girl's sobs grew more faint but she did not answer nor raise her head. She was frail and blond with wide blue eyes set far apart. Her thick hair was done low at the back of her neck. She had a small pretty mouth and a rather prominent nose. Her mother must have resembled her before she hardened into a cynical old woman, before the prominent nose became an eagle's beak and the small pretty mouth a thin-lipped sardonic one. The mother, puzzled and silent, sat stiffly beside the sobbing girl, fingering all the while the chain of amethysts set in Spanish silver.

"Are you tired?" she asked presently.

"No."

"Then what is it, Irene? There must be some reason. Girls don't behave like this for nothing. What have you done that has made you miserable?"

"Nothing," sobbed the girl. "Nothing!"

The mother sat up a little straighter and began to trace with her ebony stick the outlines of the roses on the Aubusson carpet. At length she spoke again in a clear, hard voice.

"Then you must pull yourself together and come out. I want you to find Lily and the Governor.—Every one is leaving and they should be here. There's no use in giving a party for him if he is going to snub the politicians. . . . Here—sit up! . . . Turn round while I fasten your hair."

With perfect deliberation the mother arranged the girl's hair, smoothed the crumpled muslin of her dress, patted straight the blue ribbon sash, dried her eyes, and bade her stand away to be surveyed.

"Now," she said in the same crisp voice, "You look all right . . . I can't have you behaving like this. . . . You should be out in the garden. Before I die, Irene, I want to see you married. You never will be if you hide yourself where no one can see you. . . . I don't worry over Lily—she can take care of herself. Go and find them and bring them back. . . . Tell them I said to return at once."

The girl, without a word, went out of the room into the big dark hallway and thence into the garden. Her mother's voice was one made to command. It was seldom that any one refused to carry out her orders. When Irene reached the terrace the guests were making their way back toward the house in little groups of two or three, ladies in summer dresses very tight at the waists, shielding their complexions from the June sun with small, bright-colored parasols . . . Mrs. Mills, the rector's wife, Miss Bird, the Town librarian, Mrs. Smyth, wife of the Methodist clergyman, Mrs. Miliken, wife of the sheriff, Miss Abercrombie, Mrs. . . . And behind them, the husbands, and the stray politicians who treated the little arbor over the punch bowl as though it were a corner saloon. The punch was gone now and the last of the pink ices melted. From other parts of the garden more guests made their way toward the house. Irene passed them, bowing and forcing herself to smile though the effort brought her a kind of physical pain. Among the rhododendrons she came upon a little terra cotta Virgin and Child brought by father from Sienna

and, remembering her convent training, she paused for a moment and breathed a prayer.

Lily and the Governor were not among the rhododendrons. She ran on to the little pavilion beyond the iris walk. It was empty. The arbor, green with the new leaves of the Concord grapes, was likewise untenanted save by the shadows of the somber, tall cypresses. The girl ran on and on from one spot of shelter to another, distracted and terrified, her muslin dress soiled and torn by the twigs. The little park grew empty and the shadows cast by the setting sun sprawled across the patches of open grass. Two hiding places remained, but these Irene avoided. One was the clump of bushes far down by the iron gates. She dared not go there because the little crowd of aliens peering through the bars terrified her. Earlier in the afternoon she had wandered there to be alone and a big tow headed boy shouted at her in broken English, "There are bones . . . people's bones hidden in your cellar!"

No, she dared not again risk the torment of his shouting.

The other hiding place was the old well behind the stables, a well abandoned now and almost lost under a tangle of clematis. There was a sheltered seat by its side. The girl ran as far as the stables and then, summoning her strength to lie to her mother if the necessity arose, turned back without looking and hastened across the garden toward the piazza. She had not the courage to approach the well because she knew that it was there she would find her sister Lily and the Governor.

When Irene entered the house, she found her mother in the drawing-room seated alone in the twilight. The guests had all departed and the old woman was smoking, a pleasure she had denied herself until the last of the visitors were gone. No one in the Town had ever seen her smoke. It was well enough to smoke at Biarritz or Monte Carlo; smoking in the Town was another matter. Julia Shane smoked quietly and with a certain elegance of manner which removed from the act all trace of vulgarity. She sat in a corner of the big room near one of the tall windows which stood open a little way admitting ghostly fragments of scent, now of iris, now of wistaria, now of lilac. Sometimes there penetrated for a second the acrid tang of soot and gas from the distant furnaces. The diamonds

and amethysts on her thin fingers glittered in the fading light. She was angry and the unmistakable signs of her anger were present—the flash in her bright blue eye, the slight trembling of the veined hands. The ebony stick rested by her side. As Irene entered she did not move or shift for a second the expression of her face.

“And where are they?—Have you found them?”

The girl’s lips grew pale, and when she replied, she trembled with the awful consciousness of lying to her mother.

“I cannot find them. I have looked everywhere.”

The mother frowned. “Bring me an ash tray, Irene, and do not lie to me. They are in the garden.” She crushed out the ember of her cigarette. “That man is a fool. He has offended a dozen important men after I took the trouble to invite them here. God knows, I didn’t want them!”

While she was speaking, the sound of footsteps arose in the open gallery that ran along the far side of the drawing-room, and two figures, silhouetted against the smoky, setting sun, appeared at the windows moving toward the doorway. They were the missing Lily and the Governor. He followed her at a little distance as though they had been quarreling and she had forbidden him to address her. At the sight of them, Irene moved toward the door, but her mother checked her escape.

“Irene! Where are you going now? What are you afraid of? If this behavior does not stop, I shall forbid you to go to mass. You are already too pious for any good on this earth.”

The frightened girl returned silently and sat down with her usual air of submission on the sofa that stood in the shadows by a mantelpiece which supported a painting of Venice, flamboyant and glowing, executed by the hand of Turner. At the sound of Lily’s voice, she shrank back among the cushions as if to hide herself. There was in the voice nothing to terrify her. On the contrary it was a voice, low and warm, indolent and ingratiating—a voice full of charm, one which inspired affection.

Lily was taller than her sister and two years older; yet there was an enormous difference between them which had to do less with age than with manner. There was about Irene something childish and undeveloped. Lily was a woman,

a young woman, to be sure, tall and lovely. Her hair was the color of honey. It held bright copper lights; and she wore it, in the fashion of Irene, low on a lovely neck that carried a warning of wilfulness. Her skin was the transparent sort which artists love for its green lights, and her eyes were of a shade of violet which in some lights appeared a clear blue. Her arms were laden with irises, azure and pale yellow, which she had plucked on her way from the old well. She too wore a frock of muslin with a girdle of radiant blue. As she entered, she laid the flowers gently among the crystal and silver bibelots of a rosewood table and rang for Sarah, the mulatto wife of Hennery, guardian of the wrought iron gates.

The Governor followed her, a tall man of perhaps forty, strongly built with a fine chest and broad shoulders. His hair was black and vigorous and he wore it cropped close to a well-shaped head. He had the drooping mustaches of the period. His was a figure which commands the attention of mobs. His manner, when he was not too pompous or condescending, was charming. People said there was no reason why he should not one day be president. He was shrewd in the way of politicians, too shrewd perhaps ever to be anything but one who made other men presidents.

He was angry now with a primitive, boiling anger which threatened to burst the bonds of his restraint. His breath came huskily. It was the anger of a man accustomed to dominate, who has encountered suddenly some one who cares not a fig for his powers.

"Madame," he said, "your daughter has refused to marry me."

The mother took up her ebony stick and placed it squarely before her, at the same time leaning forward upon it. For a moment, she smiled, almost secretly, with a sort of veiled amusement at his pompous speech. She did not speak until the mulatto woman, slipping in noiselessly, had taken the flowers and disappeared again into the vast hall. Then she addressed Lily who stood leaning against the mantelpiece, her lovely body slightly balanced, her manner as calm and as placid as if nothing had gone wrong.

"Is this true, Lily?"

The girl nodded and smiled, so slightly that the play of expression could scarcely have been called a smile. It was as though she kept the smile among her other secrets, not to be shared by people who knew nothing of its meaning.

"It is serious, Madame, I promise you," the Governor interrupted. "I love your daughter. She has told me that she loves me." He had grown a little pompous now, as though he were addressing an assembly of constituents. "What else is there?" He turned to Lily suddenly, "It is true, isn't it?"

The girl nodded. "Yes, I have told you that. . . . But I will not marry you. . . . I am not refusing because I want to be unkind. . . . I can't help it. Believe me, I cannot."

The mother began tracing the design on the carpet, round and round the petals of the faded roses. When she spoke she did not raise her head. She kept on tracing . . . tracing. . . .

"There must be some reason, Lily. . . . It is a match not to be cast aside lightly. . . . It would make me very happy."

She was interrupted by the sound of a closing door. Irene had vanished into the gallery on the far side of the drawing-room. The three of them saw her running past the window back into the garden as though she were pursued. The mother fell once more to tracing the outlines on the carpet. In the growing darkness the scent of the lilac grew more and more strong.

The Governor, who had been standing by the window, turned sharply. "I would like to speak to you, Mrs. Shane . . . alone, if possible. There are some things which I must tell . . . things which are unpleasant but of tremendous importance, both to Lily and to me." He coughed and the blood mounted to his coarse handsome face. "As an honorable man, I must confess them."

At this last statement, a faint sound of mirth came from Lily. She bowed her head suddenly and looked away.

"It would be better if Lily left us," he added savagely.

The girl smiled and smoothed her red hair. "You may speak to mother if you like. It will do you no good. It will only make matters worse. After all, it concerns no one but ourselves."

He shouted at her suddenly. "Please, will you go. Haven't

you done enough? There is no need to behave like a devil!"

The girl made no reply. She went out quietly, closing the door behind her, and made her way across the terrace to the rhododendrons where she knew she would find Irene. It was almost dark now and the glow from the furnaces below the hill had begun to turn the whole sky to a murky, glowing red. A locomotive whistled shrilly above the steady pounding of the roller mills. Through a gap in the dying hedge, the signal lights began to show, in festoons of jewels. The wind had turned and the soot and smoke were being swept toward Cypress Hill. It meant the end of the flowers. In the rare times when the wind blew from the south the blossoms were scorched and ruined by the gases.

Among the fireflies Lily hastened along the path to the rhododendrons. There, before the terra-cotta Virgin and Child, she found her sister praying earnestly. Lily knelt down and clasped the younger girl in her arms, speaking affectionately to her and pressing her warm cheek against Irene's pale one.

IV

THAT night Irene and Lily had dinner in their own rooms. In the paneled dining-room, a gloomy place decorated with hunting prints and lighted by tall candles in silver holders, Julia Shane and the Governor dined alone, served by the mulatto woman who shuffled in and out noiselessly, and was at last dismissed and told not to enter the room again until she was summoned. There followed a long talk between the Governor and the old lady, during which the handsome Governor pulled his mustaches furiously and sometimes raised his voice until the room shook and Julia Shane was forced to bid him be more cautious. She permitted him to do most of the talking, interrupting him rarely and then only to interject some question or remark of uncanny shrewdness.

At length when he had pushed back his chair and taken to pacing the room, the mother waited silently for a long time, her gaze fixed upon the tiny goblet of chartreuse which glowed pale gold and green in the light from the dying candles. Presently she leaned back in her chair and addressed him.

"It is your career, then, which is your first consideration," she began. "It is that which you place above everything else . . . above everything?"

For a moment the tall Governor halted, standing motionless across the table from her. He made no denial. His face grew more flushed.

"I have told you that I love Lily."

The old woman smiled at this evasion and the sharp look gleamed for a second in her bright blue eyes. Her thin lips contracted into the faintest of smiles, a mere shadow, mocking and cynical. In the face of his anger and excitement, she was calm, cold, with the massive dignity of an iceberg.

"It is I," she said, "who should be offended. You have no

cause for anger." She turned the rings on her fingers round and round. The diamonds and amethysts caught the light, shattering it and sending it forth again in a thousand fragments. "Besides," she added softly, "Love can be so many things. . . . Believe me, I know."

Slowly she pushed back her chair and drew herself up, supported by the ebony stick. "There is nothing to do now but hear what Lily has to say. . . . It is, after all, her affair."

The library was a square room, high-ceilinged and dark, walled by books and dominated by a full-length portrait of John Shane, builder of Cypress Hill and the first gentleman of the Western Reserve. The picture had been painted in the fifties soon after he came to the Town and a decade before he married Julia MacDougal. In the dark portrait he stood against a table with a white Irish setter at his feet. He was a tall man, slim and wiry, and wore dove gray trousers and a long black coat reaching to the knees. Set rakishly and with an air of defiance on the small well-shaped head was a dove gray top hat. His neckerchief was bright scarlet but the varnishings and dust of years had modified its color to a dull maroon. One hand hung by his side and the other rested on the table, slender, nervous and blue-veined, the hand of an aristocrat. But it was the face that impressed you above all else. It was the face of one possessed, a countenance that somehow was both handsome and ugly, shifting as you regarded it from one phase to the other as though the picture itself mysteriously altered its character before your eyes. It was a lean face, swarthy and flushed with too much drinking, the lips red and sensual yet somehow firm and cruel. The eyes, which followed you about the room, were large and deeply set and of a strange deep blue like cobalt glass with light shining through it. It was the portrait of a gentleman, of a duellist, of a sensitive man, of a creature haunted by a temper verging upon insanity. One moment it was a horrible picture; the next it held great charm. Above all else, it was baffling.

It was in this room that Julia Shane and the Governor waited in silence for Lily, who came down a little while later in response to the message from the mulatto woman.

The sound of her footsteps on the long stairs reached them before she arrived; it came lightly, almost tripping, until she appeared all at once at the open door, clad in a black cloak which she had thrown over her pegoir. Her red hair was piled carelessly atop her head and at the moment her eyes were blue and not violet. She carried herself lightly and with a certain defiance, singularly like the dare-devil defiance of the tall man in the darkening portrait. For a moment, she paused in the doorway regarding her mother who sat beneath the picture, and the Governor who stood with his hands clasped behind him, his great chest rising and falling as he watched her. Pulling the cloak higher about her white throat, she stepped into the room, closing the door softly behind her.

"Sit down," said the mother, in a strained colorless voice. "I know everything that has happened. . . . We must talk it over and settle it to-night one way or another, for good and all."

The girl sat down obediently and the Governor came over and stood before her.

"Lily," he said and then halted as though uncertain how to continue. "Lily . . . I don't believe you realize what has happened. I don't believe you understand."

The girl smiled faintly. "Oh, yes . . . I know . . . I am not a child, you know . . . certainly not *now*." All the while she kept her eyes cast down thoughtfully.

The mother leaning forward, interrupted. "I hadn't thought it would end in this fashion," she said. "I had hoped to have him for a son-in-law. You know, Lily, you must consider him too. Don't you love him?"

The girl turned quickly. "I love him. . . . Yes, . . . I love him and I've thought of him. . . . You needn't fear a scandal. There is no need for one. No one would ever have known if he hadn't told you. It was between us alone." The Governor pulled his mustaches furiously and attempted to speak but the girl halted him. "I know . . . I know," she said. "You're afraid I might tell some one. . . . You're afraid there might be a child. . . . Even if there was it would make no difference."

"But why . . . why?" began her mother.

"I can't tell why . . . I don't know myself. I only know that I don't want to marry him, that I want to be as I am. . . ." For a second the shadow of passion entered her voice. "Why can't I be? Why won't you let me? I have money of my own. I can do as I please. It is my affair."

FOR a little while the room grew silent save for the distant pounding of the Mills, regular and reverberant, monotonous and unceasing. The wind from the South bore a smell of soot which smothered the scent of wistaria and iris. All at once a cry rang out and the Governor, very red and handsome in his tight coat, fell on his knees before her, his arms about her waist. The girl remained sitting quietly, her face quite white now against the black of her cloak.

"Please . . . please, Lily," the man cried. "I will give up everything . . . I will do as you like. I will be your slave." He became incoherent and muddled, repeating over and over again the arguments he had used in the afternoon by the old well. For a long time he talked, while the girl sat as still as an image carved from marble, regarding him curiously as though the whole scene were a nightmare and not reality at all. At last he stopped talking, kissed her hand and stood up once more. The old woman seated under the portrait said nothing. She regarded the pair silently with wise, narrowed eyes.

It was Lily who spoke. "It is no use. . . . How can I explain to you? I would not be a good wife. I know . . . you see, I know because I know myself. I love you, I suppose, but not better than myself. It is my affair." A note almost of stubbornness entered her voice. "Two days ago I might have married you. I cannot now, because I know. I wanted to know, you see." She looked up suddenly with a strange smile. "Would you have preferred me to take a lover from the streets?"

For the first time the mother stirred in her chair. "Lily . . . Lily . . . How can you say such a thing?"

The girl rose and stood waiting in a respectful attitude. "There is nothing more to be said. . . . May I go?" Then turning to the Governor. "Do you want to kiss me. . . . I think it would please me."

For a second there was a terrific struggle between the desire of the man and his dignity. It was clear then beyond all doubt that he loved her passionately. He trembled. His face grew scarlet. At last, with a terrible effort he turned suddenly from her. He did not even say farewell.

"You see," said the mother, "I can do nothing. There is too much of her father in her." A shade of bitterness crept into her voice, a quality of hardness aroused by a man who no longer existed save in the gray portrait behind her. "If it had been Irene," she continued and then, checking herself, "but what am I thinking of? It could never have been Irene."

Quietly Lily opened the door and stole away, the black cloak trailing behind her across the polished floor, the sound of her footsteps dying slowly away as she ascended the stairs.

At midnight Hennerly brought the carriage round from the stables, the Governor climbed in, and from the shelter of the piazza Julia Shane, leaning on her stick, watched him drive furiously away down the long drive through the iron gates and into the street bordered by the miserable shacks and boarding houses occupied by foreigners. At the corner the jangling music of the mechanical piano drifted through the swinging doors of the saloon where a mob of steel puddlers, in from the night shift, drank away the memories of the hot furnaces.

Thus the long association of the Governor with the old house at Cypress Hill came abruptly to an end.

He left behind him three women. Of these Lily was already asleep in the great Italian bed. In an adjoining room her mother lay awake staring into the darkness, planning how to keep the knowledge of the affair from Irene. It was impossible to predict the reaction which it might have upon the girl. It might drive her, delicate and neurotic, into any one of a score of hysterical paths. The room was gray with the light of dawn before Julia Shane at last fell asleep.

As for the third—Irene—she too lay awake praying to the Blessed Virgin for strength to keep her terrible secret. She closed her eyes; she buried her face in her pillow; but none of these things could destroy the picture of the Governor stealthily opening the door of Lily's room.

VI

THESE had been a time, within the memory of Lily, though not of Irene who was but two years old, when the first transcontinental railroad stretched its ribbons of steel through the northern edge of the Town, when the country surrounding Cypress Hill was open marsh land, a great sea of waving green, of cat tails and marsh grasses with a feathery line of willows where a muddy, sluggish brook called the Black Fork threaded a meandering path. In those days Cypress Hill had been isolated from the Town, a country place accessible only by the road which John Shane constructed across the marshes from the Town to the great mound of glacial moraine where he set up his fantastic house. As a young man, he came there out of nowhere in the fifties when the Town was little more than a straggling double row of white wood and brick houses lining a single street. He was rich as riches went in those days, and he purchased a great expanse of land extending along one side of the single street down the hill to the opposite side of the marsh. His purchase included the site of the Cypress Hill house, which raised itself under his direction before the astonished eyes of the county people.

Brickmakers came west over the mountains to mold bricks for him in the kilns of the claybanks along the meandering Black Fork. Town carpenters returned at night with glowing tales of the wonders of the new house. Strange trees and shrubs were brought from the east and a garden was planted to surround the structure and shield it from the hot sun of the rolling, fertile, middle west. Gates of wrought iron were set up and stables were added, and at last John Shane returned from a trip across the mountains to occupy his house. It gained the name of Shane's Castle and, although he called it Cypress Hill, the people of the Town preferred

their own name and it was known as Shane's Castle to the very end.

Who John Shane was or whence he came remained a mystery. Some said he was Irish, which might well have been. Others were certain that he was English because he spoke with the clipped accent of an Englishman. There were even some who held that so swarthy a man could only have come from Spain or Italy; and some were convinced that his love of travel was due to an obscure strain of gipsy blood. As to the light which Shane himself cast upon the subject, no one ever penetrated beyond a vague admission that he had lived in London and found the life there too tame.

He set himself up in the house at Cypress Hill to lead the life of a gentleman, a worldly cynical gentleman, perhaps the only gentleman in the archaic sense of the word in all the Western Reserve. In a frontier community where every one toiled, he alone made, beyond the control of his farms, no pretense at working. He had his horses and his dogs, and because there were no hounds to follow and no hunters to ride with him, he set aside on the land bordering the main street of the Town a great field where he rode every day including the Sabbath, and took the most perilous jumps to the amazement of the farmers and townspeople who gathered about the paddock to watch his eccentric behavior.

Among these were a Scotch settler and his son-in-law, Jacob Barr, who owned jointly a great stretch of land to the west of Shane's farm. They kept horses to ride though they were in no sense sporting men. They were honest stock, dignified and hard-working, prosperous and respected throughout the country as men who had wrested from the wilderness a prosperous living. MacDougal was the first abolitionist in the county. He it was who established the first station of the underground railway and organized the plans for helping slaves to escape across the border into Canada. These two sometimes brought their horses into the paddock at Shane's farm and there, under his guidance, taught them to jump.

The abolitionist activities culminated in the Civil War, and the three men joined the colors, Shane as a lieutenant because somewhere in his mysterious background there was a

thorough experience in military affairs. His two friends joined the ranks, rising at length to commands. MacDougal lost his life in the campaign of the Wilderness. Jacob Barr returned stricken by fever, and Shane himself received a bullet in the thigh.

Returning as a colonel from the war he found that in place of the dead MacDougal he had as a riding companion the farmer's youngest daughter, a girl of nineteen. She had taken to the saddle with enthusiasm and was a horsewoman after his own heart. She knew no such thing as fear; she joined him recklessly in the most perilous feats and sat his most unruly horses with the ease and grace of an Amazon. She was not a pretty girl. The word "handsome" would have described her more accurately. She was strong, lithe and vigorous, and her features, though large like the honest MacDougal's, were clearly chiseled and beautiful in a large way.

The strange pair rode together in the paddock more and more frequently until, at last, the astonished county learned that John Shane, the greatest gentleman in the state, had taken MacDougal's youngest daughter east over the mountains and quietly made her mistress of Shane's Castle. It also learned that he had taken his bride to Europe, and that his housekeeper, a pretty middle-aged Irish woman who never mingled with the townspeople, had been sent away, thus ending rumors of sin which had long scandalized the county. It appeared, some citizens hinted, that Julia MacDougal had been substituted for the Irish woman.

For two years the couple remained abroad, but during that time they were separated, for Shane, conscious of his bride's rustic simplicity, sent her to a boarding school for English girls kept by a Bonapartist spinster named Violette de Vaux at St. Cloud on the outskirts of Paris. During those two years he did not visit her, choosing instead to absent himself upon some secret business in the south of Europe; and when he returned, his bride found it difficult to recognize in the man with a thick, blue black beard, the husband she had married two years earlier. The adornment gave him an appearance even more alien and sinister.

The two years were for the girl wretched ones, but in some incomprehensible fashion they hardened her and fitted her to begin the career her mysterious husband had planned. When they returned to Cypress Hill, Shane shaved off his beard once more and entered politics. From then on, great people came to stay at Cypress Hill—judges, politicians, lawyers, once even a president. As for Shane he sought no office for himself. It seemed that he preferred in politics to be the power behind the throne, the kingmaker, the man who advised and planned campaigns; he preferred the intrigues without the responsibilities. And so he became a figure in the state, a strange, bizarre, dashing figure which caught somehow the popular imagination. His face became known everywhere, as well as the stories about his private life, of strange brawls in the growing cities of the middle-west, of affairs with women, of scandals of every sort save those which concerned his personal honesty. Here he was immune. No one doubted his honesty. And the scandals did him little harm save in a small group of his own townspeople who regarded him as the apotheosis of sin, as a sort of Lucifer dwelling in a great brick house in the center of the Black Fork marshes.

In the great house, his wife, whose life it was whispered was far from happy, bore him two daughters, a circumstance which might have disappointed most men. It pleased the perverse John Shane who remarked that he was glad there was no son to carry on "his accursed name."

As he grew older the unpopularity increased until among the poorer residents of the Town strange stories found their way into circulation, tales of orgies and wickedness in the great brick house. The stories at length grew by repetition until they included the unfortunate wife. But Shane went his proud way driving his handsome horses through the Town, riding like mad in the paddock. The Town grew and spread along the outskirts of his farm, threatening to surround it, but Shane would not sell. He scorned the arguments for progress and prosperity and held on to his land. At last there came a second railroad and then a third which crossed the continent, passing on their way along the banks of the sluggish Black Fork through the waving green swamp. Shane found him-

self powerless because the state condemned the land and it was his own party which promoted the railroad. He gave way and his land doubled and tripled in value. Factories began to appear and the marsh land became precious because in its midst three railroads crossed in a triangle which surrounded the house at Cypress Hill. Shane became older and more perverse. The tales increased, tales of screams heard in the night and of brutalities committed upon his wife; more scandals about a young servant girl leaked out somehow and were seized by the population of the Town. But throughout the state Shane's name still commanded respect. When the great came to the Town they stopped at Shane's Castle where the drawing-room was thrown open and receptions were held with the rag, tag and bobtail permitted to satisfy their curiosity. They found nothing but a handsome house, strange and beautifully furnished in a style unknown in the Town. John Shane and his wife, her face grown hard now as the jewels on her fingers, stood by this judge or that governor to receive, calm and dignified, distinguished by a worldliness foreign to the rugged, growing community.

And at last the master of Shane's Castle was stricken dead by apoplexy one winter night at the top of the long polished stairway; and the wiry, thin old body rolled all the way to the bottom. Irene, who was a neurotic, timid girl, saw him fall and ran screaming from the house. Lily was in Europe at St. Cloud on the outskirts of Paris, a *pensionnaire* in the boarding school of Mademoiselle Violette de Vaux. The wife quietly raised the body, laid it on a sofa under the portrait in the library and summoned a doctor who made certain that the terrible old man at last was dead.

When the news of his death spread through the Town, Italian workmen passing along the railroad at the foot of Cypress Hill crossed themselves and looked away as though the devil himself lay in state inside the wrought iron gates. Governors, judges and politicians attended the funeral and the widow appeared in deep mourning which she wore for three years. She played the rôle of a wife bereft of a devoted husband. The world whispered tales of her unhappiness, but the world *knew* nothing. When great people came to the

Town, they were still entertained at Cypress Hill. The legend of John Shane attained the most fantastic proportions; it became a part of the Town's tradition. The words which Stepan Krylenko, the tow-headed Ukrainian, shouted through the wrought iron gates at the terrified Irene were simply an echo of certain grotesque stories.

After the death of her husband, Julia Shane sold off piece-meal at prodigious prices the land in the marshes traversed by the railroads. Factory after factory was erected. Some built farming implements, some manufactured wooden ware, but it was steel which occupied most of the district. Rolling mills came in and blast furnaces raised their bleak towers until Shane's Castle was no longer an island surrounded by marshes but by great furnaces, steel sheds and a glistening maze of railway tracks. New families grew wealthy and came into prominence, the Harrisons among them. Some of the Shane farm land was sold, but out of it the widow kept a wide strip bordering Main Street where she erected buildings which brought her fat rents. The money that remained she invested shrewdly so that it increased at a startling rate. She became a rich woman and the legend of Shane's Castle grew, spurred on by envy.

To the foreigners who lived in the hovels at the gate of Cypress Hill, the house and the park became the symbols of an oppressing wealth, of a crude relentless power no less savage than the old world which they had deserted for this new one. It was true that Julia Shane had nothing to do with the mills and furnaces; her money came from the land she owned. The mills were owned by the Harrisons and Judge Weissman; but Shane's Castle became an easy symbol upon which to fix a hatred. Its fading grandeur arose in the very midst of the hot and overcrowded kennels of the workers.

VII

SIX weeks after the night the Governor drove furiously away from the house at Cypress Hill, Julia Shane gave her last dinner before sending Lily away. It was small, including only Mrs. Julis Harrison, her son William, and Miss Abercrombie, but it served her purpose clearly as a piece of strategy to deceive the Town. Irene was absent, having gone back to the convent in the east where she had been to school as a little girl. A great doctor advised the visit, a doctor who held revolutionary ideas gained in Vienna. It was, he said, the one means of bringing the girl round, since he could drag from her no sane reason for her melancholy and neurasthenic behavior. Her mother could discover nothing; indeed it appeared that the girl had a strange fear of her which struck her dumb. So Julia Shane overcame her distaste for the Roman Catholic church and permitted the girl to return, thanking Heaven that she had kept from her the truth. This, she believed, would have caused Irene to lose her mind.

In the drawing-room after dinner a discreet battle raged with Julia Shane on one side and Mrs. Julis Harrison and Miss Abercrombie on the other. Lily and William Harrison withdrew to the library. In a curious fashion the drawing-room made an excellent battle-ground for so polite a struggle. It was so old, so mysterious and so delicate. There were no lights save the lamps, three of them, one majolica, one blue faience and one Ming, and the candles in the sconces on each side of the tall mirror and the flaming Venice of Mr. Turner. The only flowers were a bowl of white peonies which Lily had been able to save from the wreck of a garden beaten for three days by a south wind.

"The Governor's visit," observed Mrs. Harrison, "turned out unfortunately. He succeeded in offending almost every one of importance."

"And his sudden going-away," added Miss Abercrombie, eagerly leaning forward.

Julia Shane stirred in her big chair. To-night she wore an old-fashioned gown of black lace, very tight at the waist and very low in the neck, which displayed boldly the boniness of her strong shoulders. "I don't think he intended slighting any one," she said. "He was called away by a telegram. A Governor, you know, has duties. When Colonel Shane was alive . . ." And she launched into an anecdote of twenty years earlier, told amusingly and skilfully, leading Mrs. Julis Harrison and Miss Abercrombie for the time being far away from the behavior of the Governor. She spoke of her husband as she always did, in terms of the most profound devotion.

Mrs. Harrison was a handsome stout woman, a year or two older than Julia Shane but, unlike her, given to following the fashions closely. She preserved an illusion of youth by much lacing and secret recourse to rouge, a vain deception before Julia Shane, who knew rouge in all its degrees in Paris where rouge was used both skilfully and frankly. She moved, the older woman, with a slight pomposity, conscious always of the dignity of her position as the richest woman in the Town; for she was richer by a million or two than Julia Shane, to whom she acceded nothing save the prestige which was Cypress Hill and its tradition.

Miss Abercrombie, a spinster of uncertain age, wore her hair in a pompadour and spoke French, as she believed, perfectly. It was necessary that she believe in her own French, for she it was who instructed the young girls of the Town in French and in history, drawing upon a background derived from a dozen summers spent at one time or another on the continent. Throughout Julia Shane's long anecdote, Miss Abercrombie interrupted from time to time with little fluttering sighs of appreciation, with "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and sudden observations of how much pleasanter the Town had been in the old days. When the anecdote at last was finished, she it was who brought the conversation by a sudden heroic gesture back to the Governor.

"And tell me, dear Julia," she said. "Is there no news of Lily? . . . Has nothing come of the Governor's devotion?"

There was nothing, Julia replied with a sharp, compressed smile. "Nothing at all, save a flirtation. Lily, you know, is very pretty."

"So beautiful!" remarked Mrs. Harrison. "I was telling my son William so, only to-night. He admires her . . . deeply, you know, deeply." She had taken to fanning herself vigorously for the night was hot. She did it boldly, endeavoring in vain to force some stray zephyr among the rolls of fat inside her tight bodice.

"What I can never understand," continued Miss Abercrombie, "is why Lily hasn't already married. A girl so pretty and so nice to every one . . . especially older people."

Mrs. Shane became falsely deprecating of Lily's charms. "She is a good girl," she said. "But hardly as charming as all that. The trouble is that she's very fastidious. She isn't easy to suit." In her deprecation there was an assumption of superiority, as though she could well afford to deprecate because no one could possibly take her seriously.

"She's had plenty of chances. . . . I don't doubt that," observed Miss Abercrombie. "I can remember that summer when we were all in Aix together. . . . Do you remember the young Englishman, Julia? The nice one with yellow hair?" She turned to Mrs. Julis Harrison with an air of arrogant pride and intimacy. "He was the second son of a peer, you know, and she could have had him by a turn of her finger."

And the association with the peerage placed for the time being Miss Abercrombie definitely on the side of Julia Shane in the drawing-room skirmish.

"And Harvey Biggs was so devoted to her," she babbled on. "Such a nice boy . . . gone now to the war like so many other brave fellows." Then as though remembering suddenly that William Harrison was not at the war but safe in the library across the hall, she veered quickly. "They say the Spanish atrocities in Cuba are beyond comprehension. I feel that we should spread them as much as possible to rouse the spirit of the people."

"I've thought since," remarked Mrs. Harrison, "that you should have had flags for decorations at the garden party, Julia. With a war on and especially with the Governor here.

I only mention it because it has made people talk. It only adds to the resentment against his behavior."

"I thought the flowers were enough," replied Mrs. Shane, making a wry face. "They were so beautiful until cinders from your furnaces destroyed them. Those peonies," she added, indicating the white flowers that showed dimly in the soft light, "are all that is left." There was a moment's pause and the distant throb of the Mills filled the room, proclaiming their eternal presence. It was a sound which never ceased. "The garden party seems to have been a complete failure. I'm growing too old to entertain properly."

"Nonsense!" declared Mrs. Julis Harrison with great emphasis. "But I don't see why you persist in living here with the furnaces under your nose."

"I shan't live anywhere else. Cypress Hill was here before the Mills . . . long before."

Almost unconsciously each woman discovered in the eye of the other a faint gleam of anger, the merest flash of spirit, a sign of the eternal struggle between that which is established and that which is forever in a state of flux, which Mrs. Julis Harrison in her heart called "progress" and Julia Shane in hers called "desecration."

VIII

THE struggle ended here because at that moment the voice of William Harrison, drawling and colorless, penetrated the room. He came in from the hallway, preceded by Lily, who wore a gown of rose-colored satin draped at the waist and ornamented with a waterfall of lace which descended from the discreet V at the neck. He was an inch or two shorter than Lily, with pale blond hair and blue eyes that protruded a little from beneath a high bald forehead. His nose was long and his mouth narrow and passionless. He held himself very straight, for he was conscious that his lack of stature was inconsistent with the dignity necessary to the heir of the Harrison millions.

"It is late, mother," he said. "And Lily is leaving tomorrow for New York. She is sailing, you know, on Thursday."

His face was flushed and his manner nervous. He fingered his watch-chain, slipping the ruby clasp backward and forward restlessly.

"Sailing!" repeated Mrs. Harrison, sitting bolt upright in her chair and suspending her fan in mid-air. "Sailing! Why didn't you tell me, Julia? I should have sent you a going-away present, Lily."

"Sailing," echoed Miss Abercrombie, "to France, my dear! I have some commissions you must do for me. Do you mind taking a package or two?"

Lily smiled slowly. "Of course not. Can you send them down in the morning? I'm afraid I won't get up to the Town to-morrow."

She moved aside suddenly to make way for the mulatto woman, Hennery's wife, for whom Julia Shane had rung at the moment of William Harrison's first speech.

"Tell Hennery," she said, "to send round Mrs. Harrison's carriage." The old woman was taking no chances now.

There followed the confusion which surrounds the collecting of female wraps, increased by the twittering of Miss Abercrombie in her excitement over the thought of a voyage to "the continent." The carriage arrived and the guests were driven off down the long drive and out into the squalid street.

When Miss Abercrombie had been dropped at a little old house which, sheltered by lilacs, elms and syringas, stood in the old part of the Town, William Harrison shifted his position in the victoria, fingered his watch chain nervously and lowered his voice lest the coachman hear him above the rumble of the rubber-tires on the cobble-stones.

"She refused me," he said.

For a time the victoria rumbled along in silence with its mistress sitting very straight, breathing deeply. At length she said, "She may come round. . . . You're not clever with women, William."

The son writhed in the darkness. He must sometimes have suspected that his mother's opinion of him was even less flattering than his own. There was no more talk between them that night. For Mrs. Harrison a great hope had been killed—put aside perhaps expressed it more accurately, for she was a powerful woman who did not accept defeat passively. She had hoped that she might unite the two great fortunes of the Town. Irene had been tried and found impossible. She would never marry any one. One thing puzzled the indomitable woman and so dulled a little the keen edge of her disappointment. It was the sudden trip to Paris. A strange incredible suspicion raised itself in her mind. This she considered for a time, turning it over and over with a perverse pleasure. At last, despite all her desire to believe it, she discarded it as too fantastic.

"It couldn't be," she thought. "Julia would never have dared to invite us to meet the girl. Lily herself could not have been so calm and pleasant. No, it's impossible!"

All the same when she went to her room in the great ugly house of red sandstone, she sat down before undressing and wrote a note to a friend who lived in Paris.

IX

AT Cypress Hill, Julia Shane and her elder daughter returned, when the door had closed on their guests, to the drawing-room to discuss after a custom of long standing the entertainment of the evening. They agreed that Mrs. Harrison had grown much too stout, that she was indeed on the verge of apoplexy; that Miss Abercrombie became steadily more fidgety and affected.

"A woman should marry," said Julia Shane, "even if she can do no better than a day laborer."

Two candles by the side of the tall mirror and one by the flaming Venice of Mr. Turner guttered feebly and expired. Now that she was alone, the old woman lighted a cigarette and blew the smoke quietly into the still air. It was Lily who interrupted the silence.

"Willie proposed to me again," she said presently.

The mother made no answer but regarded the girl quietly with a curious questioning look in her tired eyes. Lily, seated in the glow of light from the majolica lamp, must have understood what was passing in her mind.

"No," she said, "if I had wanted to marry, I could have had a man . . . a real man." For a second her eyes grew dark with emotion and her red lips curved as if she remembered suddenly and with a shameless pleasure the embraces of her lover. "No," she continued, "I wouldn't play such a trick, even on a poor thing like Willie."

The old woman knocked the ashes from her cigarette. The rings flashed and glittered in the candle light. "Sometimes," she said softly, "I think you are hopeless . . . altogether abandoned."

There was a note of melancholy in her voice, so poignant that the girl suddenly sprang from her chair, crossed the little space between them and embraced her mother impulsively.

"I'm sorry for your sake, Mama," she said. "I'm sorry. . . ." She kissed the hard, handsome face and the mother returned the embrace with a sudden fierce burst of unaccustomed passion.

"It's all right, Lily dear. I'm only thinking of you. I don't think anything can really hurt me any longer. I'm an old warrior, tough and well-armored." For a second she regarded the girl tenderly and then asked, "but aren't you afraid?"

"No!" The answer was quiet and confident.

"You're a strange, strange girl," said the mother.

MADAME GIGON with Fifi lived in a tiny apartment in the Rue de la Assomption. In the summer she went to live at Germigny l'Evec in a curve of the Marne after it has passed Meaux and Trilport, wandering its soft and amiable way between sedges and wild flags under rows of tall plane trees with bark as green and spotted as the backs of salamanders. Here she occupied the lodge of the château belonging to her cousin, a gentleman who inherited his title from a banker of the First Empire and lent the lodge rent free to Madame Gigon, whose father, also a banker, was ruined by the collapse of the Second Empire. M. Gigon, a scholar and antiquarian, one of the curators of the Cluny Museum, was long since dead—an ineffectual little man with a stoop and a squint, who lived his life gently and faded out of it with so little disturbance that even Madame Gigon sometimes examined her conscience and her respectability because there were long periods when she forgot that he had ever existed at all. Fifi was to her far more of a personality—Fifi with her fat waddle, her black and tan coat, and her habit of yapping for gateaux at tea time.

Although Madame Gigon was not English at all, tea was a fixed rite in her life. She came by the custom at the boarding school of Mademoiselle Violette de Vaux at St. Cloud on the edge of Paris where tea was a regular meal because there was always a score of English girls among Mademoiselle's *pensionnaires*. On the passing of Monsieur Gigon she had taken, under the stress of bitter necessity, a place as instructress in art and history at the establishment of the aging Mademoiselle de Vaux, who, like herself was a Bonapartist, a *bourgeoise* and deeply respectable. She saved from her small salary a comfortable little fortune, and at length retired with Fifi to the little flat in the Rue de la Assomption to live upon her

interest and the bounty of her cousin the Baron. But above even her respectability and her small fortune, she honored her position, an element which she had preserved through a lifetime of adversity. She was respected still as the daughter of a man who had ruined himself to support Napoleon the Little. She still attended the salons of the Bonapartist families in the houses and apartments of Passy, of the Boulevard Flandrin, and the new Paris of the Place de l'Etoile. She was respected still in the circles which moved about the aging figure of the Prince Bonaparte and, greatest of all, she received a card of admission signed by his own hand whenever the Prince addressed the Geographical Society.

Madame Gigon was in the act of closing her tiny apartment in the Rue de la Assomption for the summer when the letter of Julia Shane arrived. At the news it contained, she suspended the operations necessary to her departure for the lodge of Germigny l'Evec and settled herself to await the arrival of pretty Lily Shane, contenting herself meanwhile with taking Fifi for airings in the Bois de Boulogne, a suitable distance away for one of Madame's age and infirmities. And when the day came, she managed to meet Lily in a fiacre at the Gare du Nord.

There was something touching in Madame Gigon's reception of the girl, something even more touching in Lily's reception by the fat and wheezing Fifi. The shrewd old dog remembered her as the girl who had been generous with gateaux, and when Lily, dressed smartly in a purple suit with a large hat covered with plumes, climbed into the fiacre, the plump Fifi shouted and leapt about with all the animation of a puppy.

Throughout the journey to Meaux and on the succeeding trip by carriage along the Marne to Germigny, the pair made no mention of Julia Shane's letter. They talked of the heat, of the beauty of the countryside, of Mademoiselle de Vaux, who was past ninety and very feeble, of the new girls at the school . . . until the peasant coachman drew up his fat horse before the gate of the lodge and carried their luggage into the vine covered cottage.

XI

AFTER Lily had rested in the room just beneath the dove cote, the pair, assisted by a red-cheeked farm girl, set themselves to putting the place in order. With the approach of evening, Madame Gigon took off her wig, donned a lace cap, and they were settled until the month of October.

When they had finished a supper of omelette, potatoes and wine, they seated themselves on the terrace and Madame Gigon at length approached the matter, delicately and with circumspection. It was a blue, misty evening of the sort frequent in the Isle de France, when the stillness becomes acute and tangible, when the faintest sound is sharply audible for an amazing distance across the waving fields of wheat. From the opposite side of the river arose the faint tinkling of a bell as a pair of white oxen made their way slowly from the farm to the sedge-bordered river. Overhead among the vines on the roof of the lodge, the pigeons stirred sleepily, cooing and preening themselves. The evening was beautiful, unbelievably calm, with the placidity of a marvelous dream.

After a long silence, Madame Gigon began to gossip once more and presently, she said, "To be sure, it has happened before in this world. It will happen again. The trouble is that you are too pretty, dear Lily, and you lose your head. You are too generous. I always told Mademoiselle you were more like our girls than the English or Americans."

Lily said nothing. It appeared that she heard nothing old Madame Gigon said. Wrapped in her black cloak against the chill of the faint mist which swam above the Marne, she seemed lost in the breathless beauty of the evening.

"Why, in my family, it has happened. There was my cousin . . . a sister of the Baron who lives here in the Chateau. . . ." And Madame Gigon moved from one case to

another, justifying Lily's strange behavior. When she had finished with a long series, she shook her head gently and said, "I know, I know . . .," smiling all the while as though she had known many lovers and been as seductive as Cleopatra. She drank the last of her coffee, drying her mustache when she had finished.

"I brought down some fine lawn and some lace from Paris," she said, "I remember that you always sewed beautifully. We shall be busy this winter in the little flat."

And then Lily stirred for the first time, moving her body indolently with her eyes half-closed, her head resting on the back of the chair. "We shan't live in the little flat, Madame Gigon. . . . We shall have a house. . . . I know just the one, in the Rue Raynouard. You see, I am going to live in Paris always. I am never going back to America to live."

The old Frenchwoman said nothing, either in approval or disagreement, but she grew warm suddenly with pleasure. The house in the Rue Raynouard captured her imagination. It meant that she would have the dignity of surroundings suitable to one who received signed cards from the Prince Bonaparte to his lectures. She could have a salon. She knew that Lily Shane, like all Americans, was very rich.

A little while later they went inside and Lily in her room just under the dove-cote lighted a candle and settled herself to writing letters. One she addressed to the convent where Irene was stopping, one to Cypress Hill, and the last, very short and formal, she addressed the Governor. It was the first line she had written him. Also it was the last.

XII

IN the Town the tidings of Lily's sudden departure followed the course of all bits of news from Shane's Castle. It created for a time a veritable cloud of gossip. Again when it became gradually known that she intended living in Paris, heads wagged for a time and stories of her father were revived. Her name became the center of a myriad tales such as accumulate about beautiful women who are also indifferent.

But of one fact the Town learned nothing. It had no knowledge of a cablegram which arrived at Shane's Castle containing simply the words, "John has arrived safely and well." Only the telegraph operator saw it and to him the words could have meant nothing.

It was Mrs. Julis Harrison who kept alive the cloud of rumors that closed over the memory of Lily. When she was not occupied with directing the activities of the Mills through the mouthpiece of her son Willie, she fostered her suspicions. The letter addressed to a friend in Paris bore no fruit. Lily, it seemed, had buried herself. She was unknown to the American colony. But Mrs. Harrison, nothing daunted, managed herself to create a story which in time she came to believe, prefacing it to her choicest friends with the remark that "Shane's Castle has not changed. More things go on there than this world dreams of."

As for the Governor, he visited the Town two years later on the eve of election; but this time he did not stay at Shane's Castle. It was known that he paid old Julia Shane a mysterious visit lasting more than an hour, but what passed between them remained at best a subject for the wildest speculation.

With the departure of Lily, her mother settled slowly into a

life of retirement. There were no more receptions and garden-parties. With Lily gone, there appeared to be no reasons for gaiety. Irene, as every one knew, hated festivities of every sort.

"I am growing too old," said Julia Shane. "It tires me to entertain. Why should I?"

It was not true that she was old, yet it was true that she was tired. It was clear that she was letting slip all threads of interest, even more apparent that she actually cherished her solitude.

She still condescended to go to an occasional dinner in the Town, driving in her victoria with Hennery on the box through sweating smelly Halsted street, across the writhing oily Black Fork and up the Hill to the respectable portion of the Town where lived the people of property. It was impossible to have guessed her thoughts on that infrequent journey. They must have been strange . . . the thoughts of a woman not long past middle-age who had seen within her lifetime the most extraordinary metamorphosis in the Town of her birth. She could remember the days when she rode with John Shane in his paddock, now completely buried beneath massive warehouses. She could remember the days when Halsted street was only a private drive across the marshes to Cypress Hill. Indeed it appeared, as the years passed, that Julia Shane was slipping slowly back across all those years into the simplicity that marked her childhood as a farmer's daughter. She talked less and avoided people. She no longer cared for the elegance of her clothes. As though her gaunt and worldly air had been only a mockery she began to slough it off bit by bit with the passing months. The few women who crossed the threshold of Shane's Castle returned with stories that Julia Shane, having closed the rest of the house, had taken to living in two or three rooms.

People said other things too, of Julia and her two daughters, but mostly of Lily, for Lily somehow captured their imagination. In the midst of the Town, born and bred upon the furnace girt hill, she was an exotic, an orchid appearing suddenly in a prosperous vegetable garden.

People said such things as, "Julia Shane gets no satis-

faction out of her daughter Irene. . . . I believe myself that the girl is a little queer."

Or it might be that Mrs. Julis Harrison, with a knowing shake of the head would remark, "It's strange that Lily has never married. They say she is enjoying herself in Paris, although she doesn't see anything of the Americans there. It's like John Shane's daughter to prefer the French."

XIII

MEANWHILE the Town grew. The farm where Julia Shane spent her youth disappeared entirely, broken up into checker board allotments, crossed by a fretwork of crude concrete sidewalks. Houses, uniform and unvaryingly ugly in architecture and cheap in construction, sprang up in clusters like fungi to house the clerks and the petty officials of the Mills. In the Flats, which included all that district taken over by the factories, hundreds of alien workmen drifted in to fill the already overcrowded houses beyond endurance. Croats, Slovenes, Russians, Poles, Italians, Negroes took up their abodes in the unhealthy lowlands, in the shadows of the furnace towers and the resounding steel sheds, under the very hedges of Shane's Castle. In Halsted street, next door to the corner saloon, a handful of worthy citizens, moved by the gravity of conditions in the district, opened an establishment which they gave the sentimental name of 'Welcome House, using it to aid the few aliens who were not hostile and suspicious of volunteer workers from the Town.

All this, Julia Shane, living in another world, ignored. She saw nothing of what happened beneath her very windows.

It was true that she found no satisfaction in her daughter Irene. On the return of the girl from a long rest at the convent, there took place between mother and daughter a terrible battle which did not end in a sudden, decisive victory but dragged its length across many weeks. Irene returned with her thin pretty face pale and transparent, her ash blond hair drawn back tightly from her forehead in severe nunlike fashion. She wore a suit of black stuff, plainly made and ornamented only by a plain collar of white lawn.

On the first evening at home, the mother and daughter sat until midnight in the library, a room which they used after dinner on evenings when they were alone. The little French

clock struck twelve before the girl was able to summon courage to address her mother, and when at last she succeeded, she was forced to interrupt the old woman in the midst of a new book by Collette Willy, sent her by Lily, which she was reading with the aid of a silver mounted glass.

"Mother," began Irene gently. "Mother . . ."

Julia Shane put down the glass and looked up. "What is it?"

"Mother, I've decided to enter the church."

It was an announcement far from novel, a hope expressed year after year only to be trodden under foot by the will of the old woman. But this time there was a new quality in Irene's voice, a shade of firmness and determination that was not at all in keeping with the girl's usual humility. The mother's face grew stern, almost hard. Cheri slipped gently to the floor where it lay forgotten.

"Is this my reward for letting you go back to the convent?" The voice was cold, dominating, a voice which always brought Irene into a trembling submission. The church to both meant but one thing—the Roman Catholic church—which John Shane, a Romanist turned scoffer, had mocked all his life, a church which to his Presbyterian widow was always the Scarlet Woman of Rome.

The girl said nothing but kept her eyes cast down, fingering all the while the carving on the arm of her rosewood chair. She had grown desperately pale. Her thin fingers trembled.

"Has this anything to do with Lily?" asked the mother with a sudden air of suspicion, and Irene answered "No! No!" with such intensity that Julia Shane, convinced that she still knew nothing, tried a new tack.

"You know how I feel," she said. "I am old and I am tired. I have had enough unhappiness, Irene. This would be the last."

Tears came into the eyes of the girl, and the trembling grew and spread until her whole body was shaking. "It is all I have," she cried.

"Don't be morbid!"

The eagle look came into Mrs. Shane's face—the look with which she faced down all the world save her own family.

"I won't hear of it," she added. "I've told you often enough, Irene. . . . I won't have a daughter of mine sell herself to the devil if I can prevent it." She spoke with a rising intensity of feeling that was akin to hatred. "You shall not do it as long as I live and never after I am dead, if I can help it."

The girl tried not to sob. The new defiance in her soul gave her a certain spiritual will to oppose her mother. Never before had she dared even to argue her case. "If it were Lily . . ." she began weakly.

"It would make no difference. Besides, it could never be Lily. That is out of the question. Lily is no fool. . . ."

The accusation of Irene was an old one, secret, cherished always in the depths of a lonely submissive heart. It was born now from the depths of her soul, a cry almost of passion, a protest against a sister whom every one pardoned, whom every one admired, whom all the world loved. It was an accusation directed against the mother who was so sympathetic toward Lily, so uncomprehending toward Irene.

"I suppose they have been talking to you . . . the sisters," continued Julia Shane. And when the girl only buried her face miserably in her arms, she added more gently, "Come here, Irene. . . . Come over here to me."

Quietly the daughter came to her side where she knelt down clasping the fingers covered with rings that were so cold against her delicate, transparent skin. For an instant the mother frowned as if stricken by some physical pain. "My God!" she said, "Why is it so hard to live?" But her weakness passed quickly. She stiffened her tired body, sighed, and began again. "Now," she said gruffly. "We must work this out. . . . We must understand each other better, my dear. If you could manage to confide in me . . . to let me help you. I am your mother. Whatever comes to you comes to me as well . . . everything. There are three of us, you and Lily and me." Her manner grew slowly more tender, more affectionate. "We must keep together. You might say that we stood alone . . . three women with the world against us. When I die, I want to leave you and Lily closer to each other than you and I have been. If there is anything that

you want to confess . . . if you have any secret, tell it to me and not to the sisters."

By now Irene was sobbing hysterically, clinging all the while to the hand of her mother. "There is nothing . . . nothing!" she cried, "I don't know why I am so miserable."

"Then promise me one thing . . . that you will do nothing until we have talked the matter out thoroughly." She fell to stroking the girl's blond hair with her thin veined hand, slowly, with a hypnotic gesture.

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . I promise!" And gradually the sobbing ebbed and the girl became still and calm.

For a time they sat thus listening to the mocking frivolous tick-tick of the little French clock over the fireplace. A greater sound, rumbling and regular like the pounding of giant hammers they did not hear because it had become so much a part of their lives that it was no longer audible. The throb of the Mills, working day and night, had become a part of the very stillness.

At last Julia Shane stirred and said with a sudden passion, "Come, Irene! . . . Come up to my room. There is no peace here." And the pair rose and hurried away, the mother hobbling along with the aid of her ebony stick, never once glancing behind her at the portrait whose handsome malignant eyes appeared to follow them with a wicked delight.

XIV

FOR days a silent struggle between the two continued, a struggle which neither admitted, yet one of which they were always conscious sleeping or waking. And at last the mother gained from the tormented girl a second promise . . . that she would never enter the church so long as her mother was alive. Shrewdly she roused the interest of the girl in the families of the mill workers who dwelt at the gates of Cypress Hill. Among these Irene found a place. Like a sister of charity she went into their homes, facing all the deep-rooted hostility and the suspicions of Shane's Castle. She even went by night to teach English to a handful of laborers in the school at Welcome House. For three years she labored thus, and at the end of that time she seemed happy, for there were a few among the aliens who trusted her. There were among them devout and simple souls who even came to believe that there was something saintly in the lady from Shane's Castle.

It was this pale, devout Irene that Lily found when she returned home after four years to visit her mother at Cypress Hill. Without sending word ahead she arrived alone at the sooty brick station in the heart of the Flats, slipping down at midnight from the transcontinental express, unrecognized even by the old station master who had been there for twenty years. She entered the Town like a stranger, handsomely dressed with a thick Parisian veil and heavy furs which hid her face save for a pair of dark eyes. When one is not expected one is not easily recognized, and there were people in the Town who believed that Lily Shane might never return from Paris.

She remained for a moment on the dirty platform, looking about her at the new factory sheds and the rows of workmen's houses which had sprung up since her departure. They appeared dimly through the falling snow as if they were not

solid and real at all, but queer structures born out of dreams. Then she entered one of the station cabs, smelling faintly of mold and ammonia, and drove off. Throughout the journey up Halsted street to Shane's Castle, she kept poking her head in and out of the cab window to regard the outlines of new chimneys and new sheds against the glow in the sky. The snow fell in great wet flakes and no sooner did it touch the ground than it became black, and melting, flowed away in a dirty stream along the gutters. At the corner saloon, a crowd of steel workers peered at her in a drunken wonder tinged with hostility, amazed at the sight of a strange woman so richly dressed driving through the Flats at midnight. Whatever else was in doubt, they must have known her destination was the great black house on the hill.

As the cab turned in the long drive, Lily noticed by the glare of the street light that the wrought iron gates had not been painted and were clotted with rust. The gaps in the hedge of arbor vitæ had spread until in spots the desolation extended for a dozen yards or more. In the house the windows all were dark save on the library side where a dull light glowed through the falling snow. The house somehow appeared dead, abandoned. In the old days it had blazed with light.

Jerry, the cab driver, lifted down her bags, stamped with the bright labels of Hotels Royale Splendide and Beau Rivage, of Ritz-Carltons and Metropolitans, in St. Moritz, in Cannes, in Sorrento and Firenze, and deposited them on the piazza with the wrought iron columns. The wistaria vines, she discovered suddenly, were gone and only the black outline of the wrought iron supports showed in a hard filigree against the dull glow of the furnaces.

The door was locked and she pulled the bell a half dozen times, listening to the sound of its distant tinkle, before the mulatto woman opened and admitted her to the accompaniment of incoherent mutterings of welcome.

"Mama!" Lily called up the long polished stairway. "Irene! Mama! Where are you?"

She gave her coat and furs to the mulatto woman and as she untied her veil, the sound of her mother's limping step and

the tapping of her stick echoed from overhead through the silent house. A moment later, Julia Shane herself appeared at the top of the stairs followed by Irene clad like a deaconess in a dress of gray stuff with a high collar.

ON the occasion of Lily's first dinner at home, the mulatto woman brought out the heaviest of the silver candelabra and despatched Hennery into the Town for a dozen tall candles and a great bunch of pink roses which filled the silver *épergne* when the mother and the two daughters came down to dinner; Julia Shane, as usual, wore black with a lace shawl thrown over her gray hair, a custom which she had come to adopt in the evenings and one which gave the Town one more point of evidence in the growing chain of her eccentricities. Irene, still clad in the gray dress with the high collar and looking somehow like a governess or a nurse employed in the house, took her place at the side of the table. As for Lily, her appearance so fascinated the mulatto woman and the black girl who aided her that the dinner was badly served and brought a sharp remonstrance from Mrs. Shane. No longer had Lily any claims to girlhood. Indisputably she was become a woman. A fine figure of a woman, she might have been called, had she been less languid and indolent. Her slimness had given way to a delicate voluptuousness, a certain opulence like the ripeness of a beautiful fruit. Where there had been slimness before there now were curves. She moved slowly and with the same curious dignity of her mother, and she wore no rouge, for her lips were full and red and her cheeks flushed with delicate color. Her beauty was the beauty of a peasant girl from which all coarseness had been eliminated, leaving only a radiant glow of health. She was, after all, the granddaughter of a Scotch farmer; there was nothing thin-blooded about her, nothing of the anemia of Irene. To-night she wore a tea-gown from Venice, the color of water in a limestone pool, liquid, cool, pale green. Her reddish hair, in defiance of the prevailing fashions, she wore bound tightly about her head and

fastened by a pin set with brilliants. About her neck on a thin silver cord hung suspended a single pear-shaped emerald which rested between her breasts, so that sometimes it hung outside the gown and sometimes lay concealed against the delicate white skin.

Irene throughout the dinner spoke infrequently and kept her eyes cast down as though the beauty of her sister in some way fascinated and repelled her. When it was finished, she stood up and addressed her mother.

"I must go now. It is my night to teach at Welcome House."

Lily regarded her with a puzzled expression until her mother, turning to explain, said, "She teaches English to a class of foreigners in Halsted street." And then to Irene, "You might have given it up on the first night Lily was home!"

A look of stubbornness came into the pale face of the younger sister. "I can't. They are depending on me. I shall see Lily every day for weeks. This is a duty. To stay would be to yield to pleasure."

"But you're not going alone into Halsted street?" protested Lily. "At night! You must be crazy!"

"I'm perfectly safe. . . . They know me and what I do," the sister answered proudly. "Besides there is one of the men who always sees me home."

She came round to Lily's chair and gave her a kiss, the merest brushing of cool lips against the older sister's warm cheek. "Good-night," she said, "in case you have gone to bed before I return."

When Irene had gone, an instant change took place in the demeanor of the two women. It was as though some invisible barrier, separating the souls of mother and daughter, had been let down suddenly. Lily leaned back and stretched her long limbs. The mulatto woman brought cigarettes and the mother and daughter settled themselves to talking. They were at last alone and free to say what they would.

"How long has Irene been behaving in this fashion?" asked Lily.

"It is more than three years now. I don't interfere be-

cause it gives her so much pleasure. It saved her, you know, from entering the church. Anything is better than that."

Then all at once as though they had suddenly entered another world, they began to talk French, shutting out the mulatto woman from their conversation.

"Mais elle est déjà religieuse," said Lily, "tout simplement. You might as well let her enter the church. She already behaves like a nun . . . in that ridiculous gray dress. She looks ghastly. You should forbid it. A woman has no right to make herself look hideous. There's something sinful in it."

The mother smiled wearily. "Forbid it? You don't know Irene. I'm thankful to keep her out of the church. She is becoming fanatic." There was a pause and Mrs. Shane added, "She never goes out now . . . not since a year and more."

"She is like a spinster of forty. . . . It is shameful for a girl of twenty-five to let herself go in that fashion. No man would look at her."

"Irene will never marry. . . . It is no use speaking to her. I have seen the type before, Lily . . . the religieuse. It takes the place of love. It is just as ecstatic."

The mulatto woman, who had been clearing away the dishes, came and stood by her mistress' chair to await, after her custom, the orders for the following day. "There will only be three of us . . . as usual. That is all, Sarah!"

The woman turned to go but Lily called after her. "Mama," she said, "can't we open the rest of the house while I'm here? It's horrible, shut up in this fashion. I hate sitting in the library when there is all the drawing-room."

Mrs. Shane did not argue. "Get some one to help you open the drawing-room to-morrow, Sarah. We will use it while Miss Lily is here."

The mulatto woman went out and Lily lighted another cigarette. "You will want it open for the Christmas party," she said. "You can't entertain all the family in the library."

"I had thought of giving up the Christmas party this year," replied the Mother.

"No . . . not this year," cried Lily. "It is such fun, and

I haven't seen Cousin Hattie and Uncle Jacob and Ellen for years."

Again the mother yielded. "You want gaiety, I see."

"Well, I'm not pious like Irene, and this house is gloomy enough." At the sight of her mother rising from her chair, she said . . . "Let's not go to the library. Let's sit here. I hate it in there."

So there they remained while the tall candles burned lower and lower. Suddenly after a brief pause in the talk, the mother turned to Lily and said, "Et toi."

Lily shrugged her shoulders. "Moi? Moi? Je suis contente."

"Et Madame Gigon, et le petit Jean."

"They are well . . . both of them. I have brought a picture which I've been waiting to show you."

"He is married, you know."

"When?"

"Only three weeks ago. He came here after your letter to offer to do anything he could. He wants the boy to go to school in America."

Here Lily smiled triumphantly. "But Jean is mine. I shall accept nothing from him. He is afraid to recognize Jean because it would ruin him. I shall send the boy where I like." She leaned forward, glowing with a sudden enthusiasm. "You don't know how handsome he is and how clever." She pushed back her chair. "Wait, I'll get his picture."

The mother interrupted her. "Bring me the enameled box from my dressing table. There is something in it that will interest you."

XVI

IN a moment the daughter returned bearing the photograph and the enameled box. It was the picture which interested Julia Shane. Putting aside the box she took it up and gazed at it for a long time in silence while Lily watched her narrowly across the polished table.

"He is a handsome child," she said presently. "He resembles you. There is nothing of his father." Her blue eyes were moist and the tired hard face softened. "Come here," she added almost under her breath, and when the daughter came to her side she kissed her softly, holding her close to her thin breast. When she released Lily from her embrace, she said, "And you? When are you going to marry?"

Lily laughed. "Oh, there is plenty of time. I am only twenty-seven, after all. I am very happy as I am." She picked up the enameled box, smiling. "Show me the secret," she said.

Mrs. Shane opened the box and from a number of yellow clippings drew forth one which was quite new. "There," she said, giving it to the daughter. "It is a picture of him and his new wife, taken at the wedding."

There was a portrait of the Governor, grown a little more stout, but still tall, straight and broad shouldered. His flowing mustache had been clipped; otherwise he was unchanged. In the picture he grinned amiably toward the camera as if he saw political capital even in his own honeymoon. By his side stood a woman of medium height and strong build. Her features were heavy and she too smiled, although there was something superior in her smile as though she felt a disdain for the public. It was a plain face, intelligent, yet somehow lacking in charm. The clipping identified her as the daughter of a wealthy middle-western manufacturer and a graduate of

a woman's college. It continued with a short biographical account of the Governor, predicting for him a brilliant future and congratulating him upon a marriage the public had long awaited with interest.

Lily replaced the clipping in the enameled box and closed the lid with a snap. "He had done well," she remarked. "She sounds like a perfect wife for an American politician. I should have been a hopeless failure. As it is we are both happy."

The look of bewilderment returned to her mother's eyes. "The boy," she said, "should have a father. You should marry for his sake, Lily."

"He shall have . . . in time. There is no hurry. Besides, his position is all right. I am Madame Shane, a rich American widow. Madame Gigon has taken care of that. My position is excellent. No woman could be more respected."

Gradually she drifted into an account of her life in Paris. It followed closely the line of pleasant anticipations which Madame Gigon had permitted herself during the stillness of that first evening on the terrace above the Marne. The house in the Rue Raynouard was big and old. It had been built before the Revolution at a time when Passy was a suburb surrounded by open meadows. It had a garden at the back which ran down to the Rue de Passy, once the open highroad to Auteuil. Apartments, shops and houses now covered the open meadows but the old house and the garden remained unchanged, unaltered since the day Lenôtre planned them for the Marquise de Seillac. The garden had a fine terrace and a pavilion which some day Jean should have for his own quarters. The house itself was well planned for entertaining. It had plenty of space and a large drawing-room which extended along the garden side with tall windows opening outward upon the terrace. At a little distance off was the Seine. One could hear the excursion steamers bound for Sèvres and St. Cloud whistling throughout the day and night.

As for friends, there were plenty of them . . . more than she desired. There were the respectable baronnes and comtesses of Madame Gigon's set, a group which worshiped the

Prince Bonaparte and talked a deal of silly nonsense about the Restoration of the Empire. To be sure, they were fuddy-duddy, but their sons and daughters were not so bad. Some of them Lily had known at the school of Mademoiselle de Vaux. Some of them were charming, especially the men. She had been to Compiègne to hunt, though she disliked exercise of so violent a nature. Indeed they had all been very kind to her.

"After all," she concluded, "I am not clever or brilliant. I am content with them. I am really happy. As for Madame Gigon, she is radiant. She has become a great figure in her set. She holds a salon twice a month with such an array of gateaux as would turn you ill simply to look at. I give her a fat allowance but she gets herself up like the devil. I think she is sorry that crinolines are no longer the fashion. She looks like a Christmas tree, but she is the height of respectability." For an instant a thin shade of mockery, almost of bitterness colored her voice.

Julia Shane reached over suddenly and touched her daughter's arm. Something in Lily's voice or manner had alarmed her. "Be careful, Lily. Don't let yourself grow hard. That's the one thing."

XVII

THEY sat talking thus until the candles burnt low, guttered and began to go out, one by one, and at last the distant tinkle of a bell echoed through the house.

For a moment they listened, waiting for one of the servants to answer and when the bell rang again and again, Lily at last got up languidly saying, "It must be Irene. I'll open if the servants are in bed."

"She always has a key," said her mother. "She has never forgotten it before."

Lily made her way through the hall and boldly opened the door to discover that she was right. Irene stood outside covered with snow. As she stepped in, her sister caught a glimpse through the mist of falling flakes of a tall man, powerfully built, walking down the long drive toward Halsted street. He walked rapidly, for he wore no overcoat and the night was cold.

In the warm lamplighted hall, Irene shook the snow from her coat and took off her plain ugly black hat. Her pale cheeks were flushed, perhaps from the effort of walking so rapidly up the drive.

"Who is the man?" asked Lily with an inquisitive smile.

Her sister, pulling off her heavy overshoes, answered without looking up. "His name is Krylenko. He is a Ukrainian . . . a mill worker."

An hour later the two sisters sat in Lily's room while she took out gown after gown from the brightly labeled trunks. Something had happened during the course of the evening to soften the younger sister. She showed for the first time traces of an interest in the life of Lily. She even bent over the trunks and felt admiringly of the satins, the brocades, the silks and the furs that Lily lifted out and tossed carelessly upon the big Italian bed. She poked about among the deli-

cate chiffons and laces until at last she came upon a small photograph of a handsome gentleman in the ornate uniform of the cuirassiers. He was swarthy and dark-eyed with a crisp vigorous mustache, waxed and turned up smartly at the ends. For a second she held it under the light of the bed lamp.

"Who is this?" she asked, and Lily, busy with her unpacking, looked up for an instant and then continued her task. "It is the Baron," she replied. "Madame Gigon's cousin . . . the one who supports her."

"He is handsome," observed Irene in a strange shrewd voice.

"He is a friend. . . . We ride together in the country. Naturally I see a great deal of him. We live at his château in the summer."

The younger sister dropped the conversation. She became silent and withdrawn, and the queer frightened look showed itself in her pale blue eyes. Presently she excused herself on the pretense that she was tired and withdrew to the chaste darkness of her own room where she knelt down before a plaster virgin, all pink and gilt and sometimes tawdry, to pray.

XVIII

ON the following night the house, as it appeared from the squalid level of Halsted street, took on in its setting of snow-covered pines and false cypresses the appearance to which the Town had been accustomed in the old days. The drawing-room windows glowed with warm light; wreaths were hung against the small diamond shaped panes, and those who passed the wrought iron gates heard during the occasional pauses in the uproar of the Mills the distant tinkling of a piano played with a wild exuberance by some one who chose the gayest of tunes, waltzes and polkas, which at the same hour were to be heard in a dozen Paris music halls.

Above the Flats in the Town, invitations were received during the course of the week to a dinner party, followed by a ball in the long drawing-room.

"Cypress Hill is becoming gay again," observed Miss Abercrombie.

"It must be the return of Lily," said Mrs. Julis Harrison. "Julia will never entertain again. She is too broken," she added with a kind of triumph.

A night or two after Lily's return Mrs. Harrison again spoke to her son William of Lily's beauty and wealth, subtly to be sure and with carefully concealed purpose, for Willie, who was thirty-five now and still unmarried, grew daily more shy and more deprecatory of his own charms.

It was clear enough that the tradition of Cypress Hill was by no means dead, that it required but a little effort, the merest scribbling of a note, to restore all its slumbering prestige. The dinner and the ball became the event of the year. There was great curiosity concerning Lily. Those who had seen her reported that she looked well and handsome, that her clothes were far in advance of the local fashions. They talked once more of her beauty, her charm, her kindness.

They spoke nothing but good of her, just as they mocked Irene and jeered at her work among the foreigners in the Flats. It was Lily who succeeded to her mother's place as chatelaine of the beautiful gloomy old house at Cypress Hill.

It was also Lily who, some two weeks before Christmas, received Mrs. Julis Harrison and Judge Weissman on the mission which brought them together in a social way for the only time in their lives. The strange pair arrived at Shane's Castle in Mrs. Harrison's victoria, the Jew wrapped in a great fur coat, his face a deep red from too much whiskey; and the dowager, in an imperial purple dress with a dangling gold chain, sitting well away to her side of the carriage as if contact with her companion might in some horrid way contaminate her. Lily, receiving them in the big hall, was unable to control her amazement at their sudden appearance. As the Judge bowed, rather too obsequiously, and Mrs. Harrison fastened her face into a semblance of cordiality, a look of intense mirth spread over Lily's face like water released suddenly from a broken dam. There was something inexpressibly comic in Mrs. Harrison's obvious determination to admit nothing unusual in a call made with Judge Weissman at ten in the morning.

"We have come to see your mother," announced the purple clad Amazon. "Is she able to see us?"

Lily led the pair into the library. "Wait," she replied, "I'll see. She always stays in bed until noon. You know she grows tired easily nowadays."

"I know . . . I know," said Mrs. Harrison. "Will you tell her it is important? A matter of life and death?"

While Lily was gone the pair in the library waited beneath the mocking gaze of John Shane's portrait. They maintained a tomb-like silence, broken only by the faint rustling of Mrs. Harrison's taffeta petticoats and the cat-like step of the Judge on the Aubusson carpet as he prowled from table to table examining the bits of jade or crystal or silver which caught his Oriental fancy. Mrs. Harrison sat bolt upright, a little like a pouter pigeon, with her coat thrown back to permit her to breathe. She drummed the arm of her chair with her fat fingers and followed with her small blue eyes the movements

of the elk's tooth charm that hung suspended from the Judge's watch chain and swayed with every movement of his obese body. At the entrance of Julia Shane, so tall, so gaunt, so cold, she rose nervously and permitted a nervous smile to flit across her face. It was the deprecating smile of one prepared to swallow her pride.

Mrs. Shane, leaning on her stick, moved forward, at the same time fastening upon the Judge a glance which conveyed both curiosity and an undisguised avowal of distaste.

"Dear Julia," began Mrs. Harrison, "I hope you're not too weary. We came to see you on business." The Judge bobbed his assent.

"Oh, no, I'm quite all right. But if you've come about buying Cypress Hill, it's no use. I have no intention of selling it as long as I live."

Mrs. Harrison sat down once more. "It's not that," she said. "It's other business." And then turning. "You know Judge Weissman, of course."

The Judge gave an obsequious bow. From the manner of his hostess, it was clear that she did not know him, that indeed thousands of introductions could never induce her to know him.

"Won't you sit down?" she said with a cold politeness, and the Judge settled himself into an easy chair, collapsing vaguely into rolls of fat.

"We should like to talk with you alone," said Mrs. Harrison. "If Lily could leave. . . ." And she finished the speech with a nod of the head and a turn of the eye meant to convey a sense of grave mystery.

"Certainly," replied Lily, and went out closing the door on her mother and the two visitors.

For two hours they remained closeted in the library while Lily wandered about the house, writing notes, playing on the piano; and once, unable to restrain her curiosity, listening on tip-toe outside the library door. At the end of that time, the door opened and there emerged Mrs. Julius Harrison, looking cold and massively dignified, her gold chain swinging more than usual, Judge Weissman, very red and very angry, and

last of all, Julia Shane, her old eyes lighted by a strange new spark and her thin lips framed in an ironic smile of triumph.

The carriage appeared and the two visitors climbed in and were driven away on sagging springs across the soot-covered snow. When they had gone, the mother summoned Lily into the library, closed the door and then sat down, her thin smile growing at the same time into a wicked chuckle.

"They've been caught . . . the pair of them," she said. "And Cousin Charlie did it. . . . They've been trying to get me to call him off."

Lily regarded her mother with eyebrows drawn together in a little frown. Plainly she was puzzled. "But how Cousin Charlie?" she asked. "How has he caught them?"

The mother set herself to explaining the whole story. She went back to the very beginning. "Cousin Charlie, you know, is county treasurer. It was Judge Weissman who elected him. The Jew is powerful. Cousin Charlie wouldn't have had a chance but for him. Judge Weissman only backed him because he thought he'd take orders. But he hasn't. That's where the trouble is. That's why they're worried now. He won't do what Judge Weissman tells him to do!"

Here she paused, permitting herself to laugh again at the discomfiture of her early morning callers. So genuine was her mirthful satisfaction that for an instant, the guise of the worldly woman vanished and through the mask showed the farm girl John Shane had married thirty years before.

"You see," she continued, "in going through the books, Cousin Charlie discovered that the Cyclops Mills owe the county about five hundred thousand dollars in back taxes. He's sued to recover the money together with the fines, and he cannot lose. Judge Weissman and Mrs. Harrison have just discovered that and they've come to me to call him off because he is set on recovering the money. He's refused to take orders. You see, it hits their pocket-books. The man who was treasurer before Cousin Charlie has disappeared neatly. There's a pretty scandal somewhere. Even if it doesn't come out, the Harrisons and Judge Weissman will lose a few hundred thousands. The Jew owns a lot of stock, you know."

The old woman pounded the floor with her ebony stick as

though the delight was too great to escape expression by any other means. Her blue eyes shone with a wicked gleam. "It's happened at last!" she said. "It's happened at last! I've been waiting for it . . . all these years."

"And what did you tell them?" asked Lily.

"Tell them! Tell them!" cried Julia Shane. "What could I tell them? Only that I could do nothing. I told them they were dealing with an honest man. It is impossible to corrupt Hattie's husband. I could do nothing if I would, and certainly I would do nothing if I could. They'll have to pay . . . just when they're in the midst of building new furnaces." Suddenly her face grew serious and the triumph died out of her voice. "But I'm sorry for Charlie and Hattie, just the same. He'll suffer for it. He has killed himself politically. The Jew is too powerful for him. It'll be hard on Hattie and the children, just when Ellen was planning to go away to study. Judge Weissman will fight him from now on. You've no idea how angry he was. He tried to bellow at me, but I soon stopped him."

And the old woman laughed again at the memory of her triumph.

As for Lily her handsome face grew rosy with indignation. "It can't be as bad as that! That can't happen to a man because he did his duty! The Town can't be as rotten as that!"

"It is though," said her mother. "It is. You've no idea how rotten it is. Why, Cousin Charlie is a lamb among the wolves. Believe me I know. It's worse than when your father was alive. The mills have made it worse."

Then both of them fell silent and the terrible roar of the Cyclops Mills, triumphant and monstrous, invaded the room once more. Irene came in from a tour of the Flats and looking in at the door noticed that they were occupied with their own thoughts, and so hurried on to her room. At last Mrs. Shane rose.

"We must help the Tollivers somehow," she said. "If only they weren't so damned proud it would be easier."

Lily, her eyes dark and serious, stood at the window now looking across the garden buried beneath blackened snow. "I know," she said. "I was thinking the same thing."

XIX

FOR thirty years Christmas dinner had been an event at Shane's Castle. John Shane, who had no family of his own, who was cut off from friends and relatives, adopted in the seventies the family of his wife, and established the custom of inviting every relative and connection to a great feast with wine, a turkey, a goose and a pair of roast pigs. In the old days before the MacDougal Farm was swallowed up by the growing town, New Year's dinner at the farmhouse had also been an event. The family came in sleds and sleighs from all parts of the county to gather round the groaning table of Jacob Barr, Julia Shane's brother-in-law and the companion of John Shane in the paddock now covered by warehouses. But all that was a part of the past. Even the farmhouse no longer existed. Christmas at Cypress Hill was all that remained.

Once there had been as many as thirty gathered about the table, but one by one these had vanished, passing out of this life or migrating to the West when the Mills came and the county grew crowded; for the MacDougals, the Barrs and all their connection were adventurers, true pioneers who became wretched when they were no longer surrounded by a sense of space, by enough air, unclogged by soot and coal gas, for their children to breathe.

On Christmas day there came to Cypress Hill a little remnant of seven. These with Julia Shane and her two daughters were all that remained of a family whose founder had crossed the Appalachians from Maryland to convert the wilderness into fertile farming land. They arrived at the portico with the wrought iron columns in two groups, the first of which was known as The Tolliver Family. It included Cousin Hattie, her husband Charles Tolliver, their daughter Ellen, two sons Fergus and Robert, and Jacob Barr, who made his

home with them and shared with Julia Shane the position of Head of the Family.

They drove up in a sleigh drawn by two horses—good horses, for Jacob Barr and Charles Tolliver were judges of horseflesh—and Mrs. Tolliver got down first, a massive woman, large without being fat, with a rosy complexion and a manner of authority. She wore a black feather boa, a hat trimmed with stubby ostrich plumes perched high on her fine black hair, and a short jacket of astrakhan, slightly *démodé* owing to its leg-of-mutton sleeves. After her descended her father, the patriarch Jacob Barr. The carriage rocked beneath his bulk. He stood six feet three in his stocking feet and for all his eighty-two years was bright as a dollar and straight as a poker. A long white beard covered his neckerchief and fell to the third button of his embroidered waistcoat, entangling itself in the heavy watch chain from which hung suspended a nugget of gold, souvenir of his adventure to the Gold Coast in the Forties. He carried a heavy stick of cherry wood and limped, having broken his hip and recovered from it at the age of eighty.

Next Ellen got down, her dark curls transformed into a pompadour as her mother's concession to a recent eighteenth birthday. She was tall, slim, and handsome despite the awkwardness of the girl not yet turned woman. Her eyes were large and blue and her hands long and beautiful. She had the family nose, prominent and proudly curved, which in Julia Shane had become an eagle's beak. After her, Fergus, a tall, shy boy of fourteen, and Robert, two years younger, sullen, wilful, red-haired like his venerable grandfather, who in youth was known in the county as The Red Scot. The boys were squabbling and had to be put in order by their mother before entering Cousin Julia's handsome house. Under her watchful eye there was a prolonged scraping of shoes on the doormat. She managed her family with the air of a field-marshal.

As for Charles Tolliver, he turned over the steaming horses to Hennery, bade the black man blanket them well, talked with him for a moment, and then followed the others into the house. Him Hennery adored, with the adoration of a

servant for one who understands servants. In the stables, Hennery put extra zeal into the rubbing down of the animals, his mind carrying all the while the picture of a tall gentleman with graying hair, kindly eyes and a pleasant soft voice.

"Mr. Tolliver," he told the mulatto woman later in the day, "is one of God's gentlemen."

The other group was known as The Barr Family. The passing of years had thinned its ranks until there remained only Eva Barr, the daughter of Samuel Barr and therefore a niece of the vigorous and patriarchal Jacob. Characteristically she made her entrance in a town hack, stopping to haggle with the driver over the fare. Her thin, spinsterish voice rose above the roaring of the Mills until at length she lost the argument, as she always did, and paid reluctantly the prodigious twenty-five cents. She might easily have come by way of the Halsted street trolley for five cents, but this she considered neither safe nor dignified. As she grew older and more eccentric, she had come to exercise extraordinary precautions to safeguard her virginity. She was tall, thin, and dry, with a long nose slightly red at the end, and hair that hung in melancholy little wisps about an equine face; yet she had a double lock put on the door of her room at Haines' boarding house, and nothing would have induced her to venture alone into the squalid Flats. She was poor and very pious. Into her care fell the destitute of her parish. She administered scrupulously with the hard efficiency of a penurious housekeeper.

Dinner began at two and assumed the ceremonial dignity of a tribal rite. It lasted until the winter twilight, descending prematurely because of the smoke from the Mills, made it necessary for the mulatto woman and her black helpers to bring in the silver candlesticks, place them amid the wreckage of the great feast, and light them to illumine the paneled walls of the somber dining-room. When the raisins and nuts and the coffee in little gilt cups had gone the rounds, the room resounded with the scraping of chairs, and the little party wandered out to distribute itself at will through the big house. Every year the distribution followed the same plan. In one corner of the big drawing-room Irene, in her plain

gray dress, and Eva Barr, angular and piercing in durable and shiny black serge, foregathered, drawn by their mutual though very different interest in the poor. Each year the two spinsters fell upon the same arguments; for they disagreed about most fundamental things. The attitude of Irene toward the poor was the Roman attitude, full of paternalism, beneficent, pitying. Eva Barr in her Puritan heart had no room for such sentimental slop. "The poor," she said, "must be taught to pull themselves out of the rut. It's sinful to do too much for them."

Two members of the family, the oldest, Jacob Barr, and the youngest, his grandson, disappeared completely, the one to make his round of the stables and park, the other to vanish into the library where, unawed by the sinister portrait of old John Shane, he poked about, stuffing himself with the candy sent by Willie Harrison as a token of a thrice renewed courtship. The grandfather, smoking what he quaintly called a cheroot, surveyed scrupulously the stable and the house, noting those portions which were falling into disrepair. These he later brought to the attention of Julia Shane; and the old woman, leaning on her stick, listened with an air of profound attention to her brother-in-law only to forget everything he had advised the moment the door closed upon him. Each year it was the same. Nothing changed.

In the far end of the drawing-room by the grand piano, Lily drew Ellen Tolliver and the tall shy brother Fergus to her side. Here Mrs. Tolliver joined them, her eyes bright with flooding admiration for her children. The girl was plainly fascinated by her glamorous cousin. She examined boldly Lily's black gown from Worth, her pearls, and her shoes from the Rue de la Paix. She begged for accounts of the Opéra in Paris and of Paderewski's playing with the Colonne Orchestra. There was something pitiful in her eagerness for some contact with the glamorous world beyond the Town.

"I'm going to New York to study, next year," she told Lily. "I would go this year but Momma says I'm too young. Of course, I'm not. If I had money, I'd go anyway." And she cast a sudden defiant glance at her powerful mother.

Lily, her face suddenly grave with the knowledge of Judge Weissman's visit, tried to reassure her. "You'll have plenty of opportunity, Ellen. You're still a young girl . . . only eighteen."

"But there's never any money," the girl replied, with an angry gleam in her wide blue eyes. "Papa's always in debt. I'll never get a chance unless I make it myself."

In the little alcove by the gallery, Julia Shane leaning on her stick, talked business with Charles Tolliver. This too was a yearly custom; her nephew, the county treasurer, gave her bits of advice on investments which she wrote down with a silver pencil and destroyed when he had gone. She listened and begged his advice because the giving of it encouraged him and gave him confidence. He was a gentle, honest fellow, and in her cold way she loved him, better even than she loved his wife who was her niece by blood. The advice he gave was mediocre and uninspired; besides Julia Shane was a shrewd woman and more than a match in business matters for most men.

When they had finished this little ceremony, the old woman turned the conversation to the Cyclops Mill scandal.

"And what's to come of it?" she asked. "Are you going to win?"

Charles Tolliver smiled. "We've won already. The case was settled yesterday. The Mill owes the state some five hundred thousand with fines."

Julia Shane again pounded the floor in delight. "A fine Christmas present!" she chuckled. "A fine Christmas present!" And then she did an unaccountable thing. With her thin ringed hand she slapped her nephew on the back.

"You know they came to me," she said, "to get my influence. I told them to go to the Devil! . . . I suppose they tried to bribe you."

The nephew frowned and the gentleness went out of his face. The fine mouth grew stern. "They tried . . . carefully though, so carefully they couldn't be caught at it."

"It will make you trouble. Judge Weissman is a bad enemy. He's powerful."

"I know that. I've got to fight him. The farmers are with me."

"But the Town is not, and it's the Town which counts nowadays. The day of the farmer is past."

"No, the Town is not."

The face of Charles Tolliver grew serious and the blue eyes grave and worried. Julia Shane saw that he was watching his tall daughter who sat now at the piano, preparing to play.

"If you need money at the next election," she said, "Come to me. I can help you."

XX

AT the sound of Ellen's music, the conversation in the long drawing-room ceased save for the two women who sat the far corner—Irene and Eva Barr. They went on talking in an undertone of their work among the poor. The others listened, captivated by the sound, for Ellen played well, far better than any of the little group save Lily and Julia Shane knew. To the others it was simply music; to the old woman and her daughter it was something more. They found in it the fire of genius, the smoldering warmth of a true artist, a quality unreal and transcendental which raised the beautiful old room for a moment out of the monotonous slough of commonplace existence. Ellen, in high-collared shirt-waist and skirt with her dark hair piled high in a ridiculous pompadour, sat very straight bending over the keys from time to time in a caressing fashion. She played first of all a Brahms waltz, a delicate thread of peasant melody raised to the lofty realm of immortality by genius; and from this she swept into a Chopin valse, melancholy but somehow brilliant, and then into a polonaise, so dashing and so thunderous that even Irene and Eva Barr, ignorant of all the beauty of sound that tumbled flood-like into the old room, suspended their peevish talk for a time and sat quite still, caught somehow in the contagious awe of the others.

The thin girl at the piano was not in a drawing-room at all. She sat in some enormous concert hall on a high stage before thousands of people. The faces stretched out before her, row after row, until those who sat far back were misty and blurred, not to be distinguished. When she had finished the polonaise she sat quietly for a moment as though waiting for a storm of applause to arise after a little hush from the great audience. There was a moment of silence and then the voice of Lily was heard, warm and soft, almost caressing,

"It was beautiful, Ellen . . . really beautiful. I had no idea you played so well."

The girl, blushing, turned and smiled at the cousin who lay back so indolently among the cushions of the sofa, so beautiful, so charming in the black gown from Worth. The smile conveyed a world of shy and inarticulate gratitude. The girl was happy because she understood that Lily knew. To the others it was just music.

"Your daughter is an artist, Hattie," remarked Julia Shane. "You should be proud of her."

The mother, her stout figure tightly laced, sat very straight in her stiff chair, her work-stained hands resting awkwardly in her lap. Her face beamed with the pride of a woman who was completely primitive, for whom nothing in this world existed save her children.

"And now, Ellen," she said, "play the McKinley Funeral March. You play it so well."

The girl's young face clouded suddenly. "But it's not McKinley's Funeral March, Mama," she protested. "It's Chopin's. It's not the same thing."

"Well, you know what I mean . . . the one you played at the Memorial Service for McKinley." She turned to Lily, her pride written in every line of her strong face. "You know, Ellen was chosen to play at the services for McKinley. Mark Hanna himself made a speech from the same platform."

XXI

AN irrepressible smile swept Lily's face. "They couldn't have chosen better, I'm sure. Do play it, Ellen."

The girl turned to the piano and a respectful silence fell once more. Slowly she swept into the somber rhythms of the *March Funèbre*, beginning so softly that the music was scarcely audible, climbing steadily toward a climax. From the depths of the old Pleyel she brought such music as is seldom heard. The faces in the drawing-room became grave and thoughtful. Lying among the pillows of the divan, Lily closed her eyes and listened through a wall of darkness. Nearby, her mother, leaning on the ebony stick, bowed her head because her eyes had grown dim with tears, a spectacle which she never permitted this world to witness. Presently the music swung again into a somber retarding rhythm; and then slowly, surely, with a weird, unearthly certainty, it became synchronized with the throbbing of the Mills. The steady beat was identical. Old Julia Shane opened her eyes and stared out of the window into the gathering darkness. The music, all at once, made the pounding of the Mills hideously audible.

When the last note echoing through the old house died away, Eva Barr, fidgeting with her embroidered reticule in search of a handkerchief to wipe her lean red nose, rose and said, "Well, I must go. It's late and the hack is already here. He charges extra for waiting, you know."

That was the inevitable sign. The dinner was ended. Grandpa Barr, very rosy from his promenade about the grounds, and the red-haired Robert, much stuffed with Willie Harrison's courting chocolates, reappeared and the round of farewells was begun.

Before Hennery brought round from the stable the Tolliver's sleigh, Lily placing her arm about Ellen's waist, drew her aside and praised her playing. "You must not throw it away," she said. "It is too great a gift." She whispered. Her manner became that of a conspirator. "Don't let them make you settle into the pattern of the Town. It's what they'll try to do, but don't let them. We only live once, Ellen, don't waste your life. The others . . . the ones who aren't remarkable in any way will try to pull you down from your pedestal to their level. But don't let them. Fitting the pattern is the end of their existence. 'Be like every one else,' is their motto. Don't give in. And when the time comes, if you want to come and study in Paris with the great Philippe, you can live with me."

The girl blushed and regarded the floor silently for a moment. "I won't let them," she managed to say presently. "Thank you, Cousin Lily." At the door, she turned sharply, all her shyness suddenly vanished, an air of defiance in its place. "I won't let them. . . . You needn't worry," she added with a sudden fierceness.

"And next week," said Lily, "come here and spend the night. I want to hear more music. There's no music in this Town but the Mills."

By the fireplace under the flaming Venice of Mr. Turner, Julia Shane talked earnestly with her niece, Mrs. Tolliver, who stood warming her short astrakhan jacket by the gentle blaze.

"And one more thing, Hattie," said the old woman. "I've been planning to give you these for some time but the opportunity never arose. I shan't live many more years and I want you to have them."

With an air of secrecy she took from her thin fingers two rings and slipped them into the red, worn hands of her niece. "Don't tell any one," she added. "It's a matter between us."

Mrs. Tolliver's hand closed on the rings. She could say nothing, but she kissed Aunt Julia affectionately and the tears came into her eyes because the old woman understood so well the intricate conventions of pride in matters of money. The

rings were worth thousands. Hattie Tolliver could not have accepted their value in money.

At the door the little party made its departure with a great deal of healthy hubbub, colliding at the same time with a visitor who had driven up unseen. It was Willie Harrison, come to call upon Lily and to propose a visit to the Mills to look over the new furnaces that were building. In the stream of light from the doorway the caller and Charles Tolliver recognized each other and an awkward moment followed. It was Willie Harrison, overcome with confusion, who bowed politely. Charles Tolliver climbed into his sleigh without making any sign of recognition. The feud between the old and the new, concealed for so many years, was emerging slowly into the open.

XXII

THE day after Christmas dawned bright and clear, as clear as any day dawned in the Flats where at sunrise the smoke turned the sun into a great copper disk rising indolently toward the zenith of the heavens. The false warmth of the January thaw, precocious that year, brought gentle zephyrs that turned the icicles on the sweeping eaves of the house into streams of water which added their force to the rivulets already coursing down the long drive to leave the gravel bare and eroded, swelling with the upheaval of the escaping frost. But the false warmth brought no beauty; no trees burgeoned forth in clouds of bright green and no crocuses thrust forth their thin green swords and errant blossoms. The January thaw was but a false hope of the northern winter. When the sun of the early afternoon had destroyed all traces of the snow save drifts which hid beneath the rhododendrons or close against the north wall of the stable, it left behind an expanse of black and dessicated lawn, in spots quite bare even of dying grass. The garden stripped of its winter blanket at last stood revealed, a ravaged fragment of what had once been a glory.

Lily, drawn from the house by the warmth of the sun, wandered along the barren paths like a lovely hamadryad enticed by deceitful Gods from her winter refuge. She ran from clump to clump of shrubbery, breaking off the tender little twigs in search of the green underbark that was a sign of life. Sometimes she found the green; more often she found only dead, dry wood, bereft of all vitality. In the flower garden she followed the brick path to its beginning in the little arbor covered with wistaria vine. Here too the Mills had taken their toll; the vine was dead save a few thin twining stalks that clung to the arbor. In the border along the walk, she found traces of irises—hardy plants difficult to

kill—an occasional thick green leaf of a companula or a foxglove hiding among the shelter of leaves provided by the careful Hennery. But there were great gaps of bare earth where nothing grew, stretches which in her childhood had been buried beneath a lush and flowery growth of sky-blue delphinium, scarlet poppies, fiery tritomas, blushing peonies, foxglove, goosefoot, periwinkle, and cinnamon pinks. . . . All were gone now, blighted by the capricious and fatal south wind with its burden of gas and soot. It was not alone the flowers which suffered. In the niches clipped by Hennery in the dying walls of arbor vitæ, the bits of white statuary were streaked with black soot, their pure bodies smudged and defiled. The Apollo Belvedere and the Venus of Cydnos were no longer recognizable.

In the course of her tour about the little park, her red hair became loosened and disheveled and her cheeks flushed with her exertion. When she again reentered the house, she discovered that her slippers, high-heeled and delicate, were ruined. She called the mulatto woman and bade her throw them away.

On the stairs she encountered her mother, whom she greeted with a little cry of horror. "The garden, Mama, is ruined. . . . Nothing remains!"

The expression on the old woman's face remained unchanged and stony.

"Nothing will grow there any longer," she said. "Besides, it does not matter. When I die, there will be no one to live in the house. Irene hates it. She wants me to take a house in the Town."

Lily, her feet clad only in the thinnest of silk-stockings, continued on her way up the long stairs to her room. If Willie Harrison had ever had a chance, even the faintest hope, the January thaw, revealing the stricken garden a fortnight too soon, destroyed it once and for all.

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XXIII

AT three that afternoon Willie's victoria called to bear Lily and Irene to the Cyclops Mills for the tour which he proposed. Workmen, passing the carriage, regarded the two sisters with curiosity, frowning at the sight of Irene in a carriage they recognized as Harrison's. A stranger might have believed the pair were a great lady and her housekeeper on the way to market, so different and incongruous were the appearances of the two women. Lily, leaning back against the thick mulberry cushions, sat wrapped in a sable stole. She wore a gray tailored suit and the smallest and smartest of black slippers. Around her white throat, which she wore exposed in defiance of fashions which demanded high, boned collars, she had placed a single string of pearls the size of peas. By the side of her opulent beauty Irene possessed the austerity and plainness of a Gothic saint. As usual she wore a badly cut suit, a plain black hat and flat shoes with large, efficient heels. Her thin hands, clad in knitted woolen gloves, lay listlessly in her lap.

Willie Harrison was waiting for them at the window of the superintendent's office just inside the gate. They saw him standing there as the victoria turned across the cinders in through the red-painted entrance. He stood peering out of the window in a near-sighted way, his shoulders slightly stooped, his small hands fumbling as usual the ruby clasp of his watch chain. At the sight of him Lily frowned and bit her fine red lip as though she felt that a man so rich, a man so powerful, a man who owned all these furnaces and steel sheds should have an air more conquering and impressive.

Irene said, "Oh, there's William waiting for us now." And a second later the victoria halted by the concrete steps and Willie himself came out to greet them, hatless, his thin blond hair waving in a breeze which with the sinking of the

sun grew rapidly more chilly. The sun itself, hanging over the roseate tops of the furnaces, had become a shield of deep copper red.

"You're just in time," said Willie. "The shifts will be changing in a little while. Shall we start here? I'll show you the offices."

They went inside and Willie, whose manner had become a little more confident at the prospect of such a display, led them into a long room where men sat in uniform rows on high stools at long tables. Over each table hung suspended a half-dozen electric lights hooded by green shades. The lights, so Willie told them, were placed exactly to the sixteenth of an inch eight feet and three inches apart. It was part of his theory of precision and regularity.

"This," said Willie, with a contracted sweep of his arm, "is the bookkeeping department. The files are kept here, the orders and all the paper work."

At the approach of the visitors, the younger men looked up for an instant fascinated by the presence of so lovely a creature as Lily wandering in to shatter so carelessly the sacred routine of their day. There were men of every age and description, old and young, vigorous and exhausted, men in every stage of service to the ponderous mill gods. The younger ones had a restless air and constantly stole glances in the direction of the visitors. The middle-aged ones looked once or twice at Lily and then returned drearily to their columns of figures. The older ones did not notice her at all. They had gone down for the last time in a sea of grinding routine.

Irene, who knew the Town better than Lily, pointed out among the near-sighted, narrow-chested workers men who were grandsons or great-grandsons of original settlers in the county, descendants of the very men who had cleared away the wilderness to make room for banks and lawyers and mills.

"Let's go on," said Lily, "to the Mills. They're more interesting than this, I'm sure. You know I've never been inside a mill-yard." She spoke almost scornfully, as if she thought the counting room were a poor show indeed. A shadow of disappointment crossed Willie's sallow face.

After donning a broadcloth coat with an astrakhan collar and a derby hat, he led the way. For a long time they walked among freight cars labeled with names from every part of North America. . . . Santa Fé, Southern Pacific, Great Northern, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul. . . . They passed between great warehouses and vast piles of rusty pig iron still covered with frost, the dirty snow lying unmelted in the crevasses; and at last they came to an open space where rose a vast, shapeless object in the process of being raised toward the sky.

"Here," said Willie, "are the new furnaces. There are to be six of them. This is the first."

"I like this better," said Lily. "There is spirit here . . . even among the laborers."

The structure bore a strange resemblance to the Tower of Babel. Swarthy workmen, swarming over the mass of concrete and steel, shouted to each other above the din of the Mills in barbaric tongues which carried no meaning to the visitors. Workmen, like ants, pushed wheelbarrows filled with concrete, with fire clay or fire bricks. Overhead a giant crane lifted steel girders with an effortless stride and swung them into place. The figures of the workmen swept toward the tower in a constant stream of movement so that the whole took on a fantastic composition, as if the tower, rushing on its way heavenward, were growing taller and taller before their very eyes, as if before they moved away it might pierce the very clouds.

At the sight of Willie Harrison, the foremen grew more officious in manner and shouted their orders with redoubled vigor, as if the strength of their lungs contributed something toward the speed with which the great tower grew. But the workmen moved no more rapidly. On returning to the mounds of sand and fire brick, they even stopped altogether at times to stare calmly like curious animals at the visitors. One or two nodded in recognition of Irene's "Good-day, Joe," or "How are you, Boris?"—words which appeared to cloud somewhat Willie's proud enjoyment of the spectacle. And every man who passed stared long and hard at Lily, standing wrapped in her furs, a little aloof, her eyes bright neverthe-

less with the wonder of the sight. Neither Lily nor Irene nor Willie spoke more than was necessary, for in order to be heard above the din they were forced to scream.

From the growing tower the little party turned west toward the sunset, walking slowly over a rough roadway made of cinders and slag. Once a cinder penetrated Lily's frail shoe and she was forced to lean against Willie while she took it off and removed the offending particle. He supported her politely and turned away his face so that he should not offend her by seeing her shapely stockinged foot.

A hundred yards further on they came upon a dozen great vats covered by a single roof of sheet iron. From the vats rose a faint mist, veiling the black bodies of negroes who, shouting as they worked, dipped great plates of steel in and out. An acrid smell filled the air and penetrated the throats of the visitors as they passed rapidly by, causing Lily to take from her hand bag a handkerchief of the thinnest linen which she held against her nose until they were once more beyond the zone of the fumes.

"Those are the tempering vats," said Willie. "Only negroes work here."

"But why?" asked Irene.

"Because the other workers won't," he said. "The acid eats into their lungs. The negroes come from South Carolina and Georgia to do it. They are willing!"

As they walked the sound of pounding, which appeared to come from the great iron shed lying before them black against the sunset, grew louder and louder, steadily more distinct. In the fading twilight that now surrounded them the Mill yard became a fantastic world inhabited by monsters of iron and steel. Great cranes swung to and fro against the glow of the sky, lifting and tossing into piles huge plates of steel that fell with an unearthly slithering din when an invisible hand, concealed somewhere high among the black vertebræ of the monsters, released a lever. High in the air lights, red and green, or cold piercing blue-white, like eyes appeared one by one peering down at them wickedly. Beyond the cranes in the adjoining yard the black furnaces raised gigantic towers crowned by halos of red flame that rose and fell, pal-

pitating as the molten iron deep in the bowels of the towers churned and boiled with a white infernal heat. Dancing malignant shadows assailed them on every side.

The three visitors, dwarfed by the monsters of steel, made their way across the slag and cinders, deafened by the unearthly noise.

"Yesterday," shouted William Harrison in his thin voice, "there was a terrible accident yonder in the other yard. A workman fell into a vat of molten iron."

Irene turned to her companion with horror stricken eyes. "I know," she said. "It was an Italian named Rizzo. I heard of it this morning. I have been to see his wife and family. There are nine of them."

William shouted again. "They found nothing of him. He became a part of the iron. He is part of a steel girder by now."

Out of the evil, dancing shadows a man blackened by smoke leapt suddenly at them. "Look out!" he cried, and thrust them against the wall of a neighboring shed so roughly that Irene fell forward upon her knees. A great bundle of steel plates—tons of them—swung viciously out of the darkness, so close to the little party that the warmth of the metal touched their faces. It vanished instantly, drawn high into the air by some invisible hand. It was as if the monster had rebelled suddenly against its master, as if it sought to destroy Willie Harrison as it had destroyed the Italian named Rizzo.

Willie lost all power of speech, all thought of action. Irene, her face deathly white, leaned against the wall calling upon Lily to support her. It was Lily, strangely enough, who alone managed to control herself. She displayed no fear. On the contrary she was quiet, fiercely quiet as if a deadly anger had taken complete possession of her soul.

"Great God!" she exclaimed passionately. "This is a nightmare!" Willie fumbled helplessly by her side, rubbing the wrists of the younger sister until she raised her head and reassured them.

"I'm all right," said Irene. "We can go on now."

But Lily was for taking her home. "You've seen enough. I'm not going to have you faint on my hands."

"I'm all right . . . really," repeated Irene, weakly. "I want to see the rest. I must see it. It's necessary. It is part of my duty."

"Don't be a fool! Don't try to make a martyr of yourself!"

But Irene insisted and Lily, who was neither frightened nor exhausted, yielded at last, weakened by her own curiosity. At the same moment her anger vanished; she became completely amiable once more.

Willie led them across another open space shut in on the far side by the great shed which had loomed before them throughout the tour. They passed through a low, narrow door and stood all at once in an enormous cavern glowing with red flames that poured from the mouths of a score of enormous ovens. From overhead, among the tangle of cranes and steel-work, showers of brilliant cold light descended from hooded globes. The cavern echoed and reechoed with the sound of a vast hammering, irregular and confused—the very hammering which heard in the House at Cypress Hill took on a throbbing, strongly-marked rhythm. On the floor of the cavern, dwarfed by its very immensity, men stripped to the waist, smooth, hard, glistening and streaked with sweat and smoke, toiled in the red glow from the ovens.

XXIV

BEFORE one of these the little party halted while Lily, and Irene, who seemed recovered though still deathly pale, listened while Willie described the operation. Into a great box of steel and fire clay were placed block after block of black iron until the box, filled at length, was pushed forward, rolling easily on balls of iron, into the fiery mouth of the oven. After a little time, the box was drawn out again and the blocks of white-hot iron were carried aloft and deposited far off, beside the great machines which rolled and hammered them into smooth steel plates.

While they stood there, workmen of every size and build, of a dozen nationalities, toiled on ignoring them. Lily, it appeared, was not deeply interested in the explanation, for she stood a little apart, her gaze wandering over the interior of the cavern. The adventure—even the breathless escape of a moment before—left her calm and indifferent. In her gaze there was a characteristic indolence, an air of absent-mindedness, which frequently seized her in moments of this sort. Nothing of her apparel was disarranged. Her hat, her furs, her pearls, her suit, were in perfect order. The flying dust and soot had gathered in her long eyelashes, but this only gave her a slightly theatrical appearance; it darkened the lashes and made her violet eyes sparkle the more. Her gaze appraised the bodies of the workmen who stood idle for the moment waiting to withdraw the hot iron from the ovens. They leaned upon the tools of their toil, some on shovels, some on long bars of iron, great chests heaving with the effort of their exertions.

Among them there was one who stood taller than the others, a giant with yellow hair and a massive face with features which were like the features of a heroic bust not yet completed by the sculptor. There was in them something of

the unformed quality of youth. The man was young; he could not have been much over twenty, and the muscles of his arm and back stood out beneath his fair skin like the muscles on one of Rodin's bronze men in the Paris salons. Once he raised a great hand to wipe the sweat from his face and, discovering that she was interested in him, he looked at her sharply for an instant and then sullenly turned away leaning on a bar of iron with his powerful back turned to her.

She was still watching the man when Willie approached her and touched her arm gently. It seemed that she was unable to look away from the workman.

"Come over here and sit down," said Willie, leading her to a bench that stood a little distance away in the shadow of the foreman's shack. "Irene wants to speak to one of the men."

Lily followed him and sat down. Her sister, looking pale and tired, began a conversation with a swarthy little Pole who stood near the oven. The man greeted her with a sullen frown and his remarks, inaudible to Lily above the din, appeared to be ill-tempered and sulky as if he were ashamed before his fellows to be seen talking with this lady who came to the cavern accompanied by the master.

"Do you find it a wonderful sight?" began Willie.

Lily smiled. "I've seen nothing like it in all my life. I never knew what lay just beyond the garden hedge."

"It will be bigger than this next year and even bigger the year after." His eyes brightened and for a moment the droop of his shoulders vanished. "We want some day to see the Mills covering all the Flats. The new furnaces are the beginning of the expansion. We hope to grow bigger and bigger." He raised his arms in a sudden gesture. "There's no limit, you know."

But Lily's gaze was wandering again back and forth, up and down, round and round the vast cavern as if she were not the least interested in Willie's excitement over bigness. Irene had left the swarthy little man and was talking now to the tow-headed young giant who leaned upon the iron bar. His face was sulky, though it was plain that he was curiously polite to Irene, who seemed by his side less a woman of flesh

and blood than one of paper, so frail and wan was her face. He smiled sometimes in a shy, withdrawn fashion.

Politely Lily turned to her companion. "But you are growing richer and richer, Willie. Before long you will own the Town."

He regarded her shyly, his thin lips twisted into a hopeful smile. Once more he began to fumble with the ruby clasp of his watch chain.

"I could give you everything in the world," he said suddenly, as though the words caused him a great effort. "I could give you everything if you would marry me." He paused and bent over Lily who sat silently turning the rings on her fingers round and round. "Would you, Lily?"

"No." The answer came gently as if she were loath to hurt him by her refusal, yet it was firm and certain.

Willie bent lower. "I would see that Mother had nothing to do with us." Lily, staring before her, continued to turn the rings round and round. The young workman with Irene had folded his muscular arms and placed his iron bar against the wall of the oven. He stood rocking back and forth with the easy, balanced grace of great strength. When he smiled, he showed a fine expanse of firm white teeth. Irene laughed in her vague half-hearted way. Lily kept watching . . . watching. . . .

"You could even spend half the time in Europe if you liked," continued Willie. "You could do as you pleased. I would not interfere." He placed one hand gently on her shoulder to claim her attention, so plainly wandering toward the blond and powerful workman. She seemed not even to be conscious of his hand.

The workmen had begun to move toward the oven now, the young fellow with the others. He carried his iron bar as if it were a straw. He moved with a sort of angry defiance, his head thrown back upon his powerful shoulders. He it was who shouted the orders when the great coffin full of hot iron was drawn forth. He it was who thrust his bar beneath the mass of steel and lifting upward shoved it slowly and easily forward on the balls of iron. His great back bent and the

muscles rippled beneath the skin as if they too were made of some marvelous flexible steel.

Willie Harrison took Lily's hand and put an end to the turning of the rings. "Tell me, Lily," he said softly, "is it no use? Maybe next year or the year after?"

All at once as though she had heard him for the first time, she turned and placed the other hand gently on top of his, looking up at the same time from beneath the wide brim of her hat. "It's no use, Willie. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry." She laughed softly. "But you were wrong in your method. You shouldn't have given me the promise about Europe. When I marry, it will be a man who will not let me leave his side."

That was all she said to him. The rest, whatever it was, remained hidden, deep within her, behind the dark eyes which found so little interest in Willie Harrison, which saw nothing but the blond giant who moved with such uncanny strength, with such incredibly easy grace about his heroic task. Perhaps if Willie had guessed, even for a moment, what was passing in her mind, he would have blushed, for Willie was, so people said, a nice young man who had led a respectable life. Such things were no doubt incomprehensible to him. Perhaps if she had spoken the truth, if she had bothered herself to explain, she would have said, "I could not marry you. I could give myself to no man but one who caught my fancy, in whom there was strength and the grace of a fine animal. Beauty, Willie, counts for much . . . far more than you guess, living always as you do in the midst of all this savage uproar. I am rich. Your money means nothing. And your power! It is not worth the snap of a finger to me. . . . Ah, if you had a face like that workman . . . a face . . . a real face, and a body . . . a real body like his, then you might ask with hope. It is hopeless, Willie. You do not interest me, though I am not eager to hurt you just the same."

But she said none of these things, for people seldom say them. On the contrary, she was content to put him off with a bare denial. It is doubtful whether such thoughts even occurred to her, however deep they may have been rooted in her soul; for she was certainly not a woman given to reflection.

To any one, it was apparent that she did not examine her motives. She was content, no doubt, to be beautiful, to live where there was beauty, to surround herself with beautiful, luxurious things.

She was prevented from saying anything further by the arrival of Irene who had abandoned her workmen to rejoin Willie and her sister. Willie, crimson and still trembling a little with the effort of his proposal, suggested that they leave. It was already a quarter to six. The workmen vanished suddenly into a little shed. Their shift was finished. They were free now to return to their squalid homes, to visit the corner saloon or the dismal, shuttered brothels of Franklin street, free to go where they would in the desolate area of the Flats for twelve brief hours of life.

XXV

THE three visitors made their way back to the office of the superintendent across a mill yard now bright with the cold glare of a hundred arc lights. On the way, Lily turned suddenly to her sister and asked, "Who was the man you were talking to . . . the tall one with the yellow hair?"

Irene, moving beside her, cast a sudden glance at her sister and the old terrified look entered her pale eyes. "His name is Krylenko," she replied in a voice grown subdued and cold. "He is the one who brought me home from Welcome House the other night. He is a bright boy. I've taught him English."

Willie, who had been walking behind them, quickened his pace and came abreast. "Krylenko?" he said. "Krylenko? Why, that's the fellow who's been making trouble. They've been trying to introduce the union." He addressed Irene. "Your Welcome House is making trouble I'm afraid, Irene. There's no good comes of educating these men. They don't want it."

Lily laughed. "Come now," she said, "that's what your mother says, isn't it? I can hear her saying it."

Willie failed to answer her, but a sheepish, embarrassed look took possession of his sallow face, as if the powerful figure of his mother had joined them unawares. And Irene, walking close to Lily, whispered to her sister, "You shouldn't have said that. It was cruel of you."

At the office of the superintendent they found Willie's victoria waiting, the horses covered with blankets against the swift, piercing chill of the winter night. The coachman shivered on the box. The three of them climbed in and Willie bade the man drive to Halsted street where he would get down, leaving the carriage to the ladies. When Lily

protested, he answered, "But I want to walk up the hill to the Town. I need the exercise."

They drove along between two streams of mill workers, one entering, one leaving the Mill yards with the change of shifts. The laborers moved in two columns, automatons without identity save that one column was clean and the men held their heads high and the other was black with oil and soot and the heads were bent with a terrible exhaustion. It was a dark narrow street bordered on one side by the tall blank walls of warehouses and on the other by the Mill yard. The smells of the Black Fork, coated with oil and refuse, corrupted the damp air. On the Mill side a high fence made of barbed wire strung from steel posts was in the process of construction. To this Willie called their attention with pride. "You see," he said, "we are making the Mills impregnable. If the unions come in there will be trouble. It was my idea . . . the fence. A stitch in time saves nine." And he chuckled softly in the darkness.

At Halsted street Willie got down and, removing his hat, bade the sisters a dry and polite good-night. But before the carriage drove on, Lily called out to him, "You're coming to the ball to-night, aren't you? Remember, there's a quadrille and you can't leave us flat at the last minute."

"I'm coming," said William. "Certainly I'm coming." And he turned away, setting off in the opposite direction toward the Hill and Mrs. Julis Harrison who sat in the ugly house of red sandstone awaiting news of the proposal. He walked neatly, placing his small feet firmly, his hands clasped behind his back, his head bowed thoughtfully. The umbrella, held in the crook of his arm, swung mournfully as he walked. His shoulders drooped wearily. He had shown Lily all his wealth, all his power; and she treated it as if it were nothing at all. In the brownstone house, Mrs. Harrison sat waiting.

The carriage drove up Halsted street past the corner saloon now thronged with mill workers, toward the house at Cypress Hill. In a tenement opposite the wrought iron gates a nostalgic Russian sat on the front stoop squeezing mournfully at a concertina which filled the winter evening with the somber music of the steppes.

Irene, leaning back pale and exhausted on the mulberry cushions, said, "Why did you ask Willie whether he was coming? You know he never misses anything if he can help it."

"I only wanted to make him feel welcome," her sister replied absently. "Since this affair over the taxes, Mama and Mrs. Harrison haven't been very thick. . . . I feel sorry for Willie. He doesn't know what it's all about."

XXVI

INSIDE the old house, Irene went to her room, and Lily, instead of seeking out her mother for their usual chat, went quietly upstairs. She ignored even the preparations for the ball. After she had taken off her clothes, she lay for a long time in a hot bath scented with verbena salts, drowsing languidly until the hot water had eliminated every soiling trace of the Mills. Returning to her room, she sat clad in a thin satin wrapper for a long time before the mirror of her dressing table, polishing her pink nails, examining the tiny lines at the corners of her lips,—lines which came from smiling too much. Then she powdered herself all over with scented powder and did up her red hair, fastening it with the pin set in brilliants. And presently, the depression having passed away, she began to sing in her low warm voice, *Je sais que vous êtes gentil*. It was a full-throated joyous song. At times her voice rose in a crescendo that penetrated the walls of the room where Irene lay in the darkness on her narrow white bed.

As she dressed for dinner, she continued to sing one song after another, most of them piquant and racy, songs of the French cuirassiers. She sang *Sur la route à Montauban*, *Toute la longe de la Tamise* and *Auprès de ma Blonde*. The dressing was the languid performance which required an hour or more, for she took the most minute care with every detail. The chemise must not have a wrinkle; the peacock blue stockings must fit as if they were the skin itself; the corsets were drawn until the result, examined for many minutes before the glass, was absolutely perfect. At the last she put on a gown of peacock blue satin with a long train that swept about her ankles, and rang for one of the black servants to hook it. Before the slavey arrived, Lily had discovered a wrinkle beneath the satin and began all over again the process of dressing,

until at the end of the second attempt she stood before the mirror *soignée* and perfect in the soft glow from the open fire by her bed. The tight-fitting gown of peacock blue followed the curves of her figure flawlessly. Then she hung about her fine throat a chain of diamonds set in a necklace of laurel leaves wrought delicately in silver, lighted a cigarette and stood regarding her tall figure by the light of the lamps. Among the old furniture of the dark room she stood superbly dressed, elegant, *mondaine*. A touch to the hair that covered her small head like a burnished helmet, and she smiled with satisfaction, the face in the mirror smiling back with a curious look of elation, of abundant health, of joy; yet there was in it something too of secrecy and triumph.

XXVII

IRENE'S room was less vast and shadowy. In place of brocade the windows were curtained with white stuff. In one corner stood a *prie dieu* before a little paint and plaster image of the Virgin and child—all blue and pink and gilt,—which Lily had sent her sister from Florence. The bed was small and narrow and the white table standing near by was covered with books and papers neatly arranged—the paraphernalia of Irene's work among the people of the Flats. Here Lily discovered her when she came in, flushed and radiant, to sit on the edge of the white bed and talk with her sister until the guests arrived.

She found Irene at the white table, the neat piles of books and papers pushed aside to make room for a white tray laden with food, for Irene was having dinner alone in her room. There had been no question of her coming to the ball. "I couldn't bear it," she told her mother. "I would be miserable. I don't want to come. Why do you want to torture me?" She had fallen, of late, into using the most exaggerating words, out of all proportion with truth or dignity. But Julia Shane, accustomed more and more to yielding to the whims of her younger daughter, permitted her to remain away.

"Have you anything to read?" began Lily. "Because if you haven't, my small trunk is full of books."

"I've plenty, and besides, I'm going out."

"Where?" asked Lily, suddenly curious.

"To Welcome House. It's my night to teach. I should think you would have remembered that." Her voice sounded weary and strained. She turned to her sister with a look of disapproval, so intense that it seemed to accuse Lily of some unspeakable sin.

"I didn't remember," Lily replied. "How should I?" And then rising she went to her sister's side and put one arm

about her shoulders, a gesture of affection which appeared to inspire a sudden abhorrence in the woman, for she shivered suddenly at the touch of the warm bare arm. "You shouldn't go out to-night. You are too tired!"

"I must go," Irene replied. "They're counting on me."

"What are you eating? . . ." remarked Lily, picking up a bit of cake from the tray, "Peas, potatoes, rice, dessert, milk. . . . Why you've no meat, Irene. You should eat meat. It is what you need more than anything. You're too pale."

Irene's pale brow knitted into a frown. "I've given it up," she said. "I'm not eating meat any longer."

"And why not?" Lily moved away from her and stood looking down with the faintest of mocking smiles. The transparent cheek of her sister flushed slightly.

"Because I don't believe in it. I believe it's wrong."

"Well, I'm going to speak to Mama about it. It's nonsense. You'll kill yourself with such a diet. Really, Irene . . ." Her voice carried a note of irritation, but she got no further for Irene turned on her suddenly, like a beaten dog which after long abuse snaps suddenly at the offending hand.

"Why can't you leave me in peace? You and Mama treat me like a child. I am a grown woman. I want to do as I please. I am harming no one but myself . . . no one . . . I'm sick of it, I tell you. I'm sick of it!"

And suddenly she began to weep, softly and hysterically, her thin shoulders shaking as the sobs tore her body. "I want to go away," she moaned. "I want to be alone, where I can think and pray. I want to be alone!" Her sobbing was at once pitiful and terrible, the dry, parched sobbing of a misery long pent up. For a moment Lily stood helplessly by her side and then, all at once, she went down on her knees in the peacock blue gown and put her lovely bare arms about her sister, striving to comfort her. The effort failed strangely. Irene only drew away and sobbed the more. "If you would only let me have peace . . . I could find it alone!"

Lily said nothing but knelt by her sister's side kissing and caressing the thin white hands until Irene's sobbing subsided a little and she fell forward among the books and papers, bury-

ing her head in her arms. The misery of the soul and spirit in some way appalled Lily. She watched her sister with a look of bewilderment in her eyes as if she had discovered all at once a world of which she had been ignorant up to now. The spectacle stifled quickly the high spirits of a moment before. The bawdy French ballads were forgotten. She had become suddenly grave and serious, the lines in her beautiful face grown hard. She was sitting on the floor, her head in Irene's lap, when a knock and the sound of her name roused her.

"Miss Lily," came the mulatto woman's voice, "Miss Shane says the guests are a-coming and you must come down."

"All right Sarah. . . . I'll be down at once."

Lily, struggling with the tight satin dress, rose slowly, kissed her sister and said, "Please, dear, stay home to-night and rest."

But Irene, still sobbing softly as if entranced by the sensual satisfaction of weeping, did not answer her. She remained leaning over the table, her face buried in her arms. But she was more quiet now, with the voluptuous stillness of one who has passed through a great emotional outburst.

Lily, once more before the mirror in her own room, rearranged her ruffled hair listening to the murmur of talk that arose from the well of the stairs. It was not until she had fastened the pin set with brilliants for a second time that she discovered with sudden horror that the peacock blue gown was split and ripped at one side from the arm to the waist. In the sudden outburst of affection for her sister, she had flung herself to her knees abandoning all thought of vanity. The gown was ruined.

From below stairs the murmur grew in volume as carriage after carriage arrived. Lily swore beneath her breath in French, tore off the gown and brought from her closet another of a pale yellow-green, the color of chartreuse. The process of dressing began all over again and in half an hour, after the mulatto woman had called twice and been sent away and the guests had gone in to dinner, Lily stood once more before the mirror, radiant and beautiful. The gown was cut lower than

the one she had tossed aside, and the yellow-green blended with the tawny red of her hair so that there was something nude and voluptuous in her appearance. The smile returned to her face, a smile which seemed to say, "The Town will see something the like of which it has never seen before."

Before going down she went to Irene's room once more, only to find it dark and empty. Clad in the gray suit and the plain black hat Irene had made her way silently to the stairs at the back of the house and thence through the gallery that led past the drawing-room windows into the dead park. The austere and empty chamber appeared to rouse a sudden shame in Lily, for she returned to her room before descending the long stairs and took from the trunk a great fan of black ostrich feathers to shield her bare breasts alike from the stares of the impudent and the disapproving.

The ball was a great success. The orchestra, placed in the little alcove by the gallery, played a quadrille followed by waltzes, two-steps and polkas. Until ten o'clock the carriages made their way along Halsted street past the Mills and the squalid houses through the wrought iron gates into the park; and at midnight they began to roll away again carrying the guests to their homes. Lily, all graciousness and charm, moved among the dancers distributing her favors equitably save in the single instance of Willie Harrison, who looked so downcast and prematurely old in his black evening clothes that she danced with him three times and sat out a waltz and a polka. And all the Town, ignorant of the truth, whispered that Willie's chances once more appeared good.

Ellen Tolliver was there, in a dress made at home by her mother, and she spent much of the evening by the side of her aunt Julia who sat in black jet and amethysts at one end of the drawing-room leaning on her stick and looking for all the world like a wicked duchess. At the sound of the music and the sight of the dancers, the old gleam returned for a little time to her tired eyes.

Ellen was younger than the other guests and knew most of them only by sight but she had partners none the less, for she was handsome despite her badly made gown and her absurd pompadour, and she danced with a barbaric and energetic grace.

When she was not dancing her demeanor carried no trace of the drooping wall-flower. She regarded the dancers with a expression of defiance and scorn. None could have taken her for a poor relation.

XXVIII

A LITTLE while before midnight Irene, accompanied by Krylenko, returned from the Flats and hurried quietly as a moth through the gallery past the brightly lighted windows and up the stairway to her room. The mill worker left her at the turn of the drive where he stood for a time in the melting snow fascinated by the sound of music and the sight of the dancers through the tall windows. Among them he caught a sudden glimpse of Irene's sister, the woman who had watched him at work in the mill shed. She danced a waltz with the master of the Mills, laughing as she whirled round and round with a wild exuberance. Amid the others who took their pleasures so seriously, she was a bacchante, pagan, utterly abandoned. The black fan hung from her wrist and the pale yellow-green ball gown left all her breast and throat exposed in a voluptuous glow of beauty. Long after the music stopped and she had disappeared, Krylenko stood in the wet snowbank staring blindly at the window which she had passed again and again. He stood as if hypnotized, as if incapable of action. At length a coachman, passing by, halted for a moment to regard him in astonishment, and so roused him into action. Murmuring something in Russian, he set off down the long drive walking well to one side to keep from under the wheels of the fine carriages which had begun to leave.

The last carriage, containing Willie Harrison and two female cousins, passed through the wrought iron gates a little after one o'clock, leaving Lily, her mother and Ellen Tolliver who, having no carriage of her own, had chosen this night to spend at Cypress Hill, alone amid the wreckage of crumpled flowers and forgotten cotillion favors. With the departure of the last carriage and the finish of the music, the gleam died out of Julia Shane's eyes. She became again an old

woman with a tired bent figure, her sharp eyes half closed by dark swellings which seemed to have appeared all at once with the death of the last chord.

"I'm going to bed," she said, bidding the others good-night. "We can discuss the party in the morning."

She tottered up the stairs leaving her daughter and grand-niece together in the long drawing-room. When she had gone, Lily rose and put out the lamps and candles one by one until only three candles in a sconce above the piano remained lighted.

"Now," she said, lying back among the cushions of the divan and stretching her long handsome legs, "play for me . . . some Brahms, some Chopin."

The girl must have been weary but the request aroused all her extraordinary young strength. She sat at the piano silhouetted against the candle light . . . the curve of her absurd pompadour, the more ridiculous curve of her corseted figure. From the divan Lily watched her through half-closed eyes. She played first of all two études of Chopin and then a waltz or two of Brahms, superbly and with a fine freedom and spectacular fire, as if she realized that at last she had the audience she desired, a better audience than she would ever have again no matter how celebrated she might become. Above the throbbing of the Mills the thread of music rose triumphant in a sort of eternal beauty, now delicate, restrained, now rising in a tremendous, passionate crescendo. The girl invested it with all the yearnings that are beyond expression, the youth, the passionate resentment and scorn, the blind gropings which swept her baffled young soul. Through the magic of the sound she managed to convey to the woman lying half-buried among the cushions those things which it would have been impossible for her to utter, so high and impregnable was the wall of her shyness and pride. And Lily, watching her, wept silently at the eloquence of the music.

Not once was there a spoken word between them, and at last the girl swung softly and mournfully into the macabre beauties of the Valse Triste, strange and mournful music, not great, even a little mediocre, yet superbly beautiful beneath her slim fingers. She peopled the shadowy room with ghostly un-

real figures, of tragedy, of romance, of burning, unimagined desires. The dancing shadows cast by the candles among the old furniture became through the mist of Lily's tears fantastic, yet familiar, like memories half-revealed that fade before they can be captured and recognized. The waltz rose in a weird unearthly ecstasy, swirling and exultant, the zenith of a joy and a completion yearned for but never in this life achieved . . . the something which lies just beyond the reach, sensed but unattainable, something which Ellen sought and came nearest to capturing in her music, which Irene, kneeling on the *prie dieu* before the Sienna Virgin, sought in a mystic exaltation, which Lily sought in her own instinctive, half-realized fashion. It was a quest which must always be a lonely one; somehow the music made the sense of loneliness terribly acute. The waltz grew slower once more and softer, taking on a new and melancholy fire, until at last it died away into stillness leaving only the sound of the Mills to disturb the silence of the old room.

After a little pause, Ellen fell forward wearily upon the piano, her head resting upon her arms, and all at once with a faint rustle she slipped gently to the floor, the home-made ball dress crumpled and soiled beneath her slim body. Lily sprang from among the pillows and gathered the girl against her white, voluptuous breasts, for she had fainted.

XXIX

THE visit of Ellen was extended from one night to three. The piano was a beautiful one, far better than the harsh-toned upright in the Tolliver parlor in the Town, and Ellen gladly played for hours with only Lily, lying among the cushions, and old Julia Shane, lost in her own fantastic memories, for an audience.

On the third night, long after twelve o'clock, as Lily and her cousin climbed the long stairway, the older woman said, "I have some clothes, Ellen, that you may have if you like. They have been worn only a few times and they are more beautiful than anything you can find in America."

The girl did not answer until they had reached Lily's room and closed the door behind them. Her face was flushed with the silent struggle between a hunger for beautiful things and a fantastic pride, born of respectable poverty. In some way, her cousin sensed the struggle.

"They are yours if you want them," she said. "You can try them on if you like at any rate."

Ellen smiled gratefully. "I'd like to," she said timidly. "Thank you."

While the girl took off her shirtwaist and skirt, Lily busied herself among the shadows of her closet. When she returned she bore across her arms three gowns, one dull red, one black and one yellow. The girl stood waiting shyly, clad only in her cheap underclothing coarsened and yellowed by many launderings.

"You must take those things off," said Lily. "I'll give you others." And she brought out undergarments of white silk which Ellen put on, shivering a little in the chill of the big room.

Then Lily took the pale yellow gown and slipped it over her cousin's head. It belonged to no period of fashion. It

hung from the shoulders in loose folds of shining silk, clinging close to the girl's slim body. There was a silver girdle which fastened over the hips. Ellen turned to regard herself in the mirror.

"But wait," said Lily, laughing, "you've only begun. We've got to change your hair and do away with that ridiculous rat. Why do you spoil such beautiful hair with a wad of old wire?"

She took out the pins and let the hair fall in a clear, black shower. It was beautiful hair of the thick, sooty-black color that goes with fair skin and blue eyes. It fell in great coils over the pale yellow gown. Lily, twisting it into loose strands, held it against the light of the lamp.

"Beautiful hair," she said, "like the hair of Rapunzel."

Then she twisted it low about Ellen's head, loosely so that the light, striking the free ends created a kind of halo. With a supreme gesture of scorn, she tossed the "rat" into the scrap basket.

"There," she said, turning her cousin to face the long mirror. "There . . . Behold the great pianist . . . the great artist."

In the magical mirror stood a tall lovely woman. The ridiculous awkward girl had vanished; it was another creature who stood there transfigured and beautiful. And in her frank blue eyes, there was a new look, something of astonishment mingled with determination. The magical mirror had done its work. From that moment the girl became a stranger to the Town. She had come of age and slipped all unconsciously into a new world.

With shining eyes she turned and faced her cousin.

"May I really have the clothes, Lily?"

"Of course, you silly child!"

And Lily smiled because the clothes had never been worn at all. They were completely new.

XXX

AT breakfast on the following morning, the mulatto woman laid before Lily's plate a cablegram. It read simply, "Jean has measles."

Trunks were packed with desperate haste. The entire household was thrown into an uproar, all save old Julia Shane who continued to move about with the same unruffled calm, with the same acceptancy of whatever came to her. At midnight Lily boarded the express for the East. It was not until the middle of the week, when the drawing-room had been wrapped once more in cheesecloth and scented with camphor, that the Town learned of Lily's sudden return to Paris. It was impossible, people decided, to calculate the whims of her existence.

Three months after her sudden departure, she sat one early spring afternoon on the terrace of her garden in the Rue Raynouard, when old Madame Gigon, in a bizarre gown of maroon poplin, with the fat and aging Fifi at her heels, brought her a letter from Julia Shane.

Tearing it open, Lily began to read,

"Of course the biggest bit of news is Ellen's escapade. She has eloped with a completely commonplace young man named Clarence Murdock, a traveling salesman for an electrical company, who I believe was engaged to May Seton . . . the Setons who own the corset factory east of the Harrison Mills. They have gone to New York to live and now, I suppose, Ellen will have her chance to go on with her music. Knowing Ellen, I am certain she does not love this absurd man. As for Hattie she is distraught and feels that Ellen has committed some terrible sin. Nothing I can say is able to alter her mind. To be sure, the fellow has nothing to commend him, but I'm willing to let Ellen work it out. She's no fool. None of our family is that. Hattie thinks it was the gowns you gave

Ellen which turned her head. But I suspect that Ellen saw this young drummer simply as a means of escape . . . a way out of all her troubles. Of course the Town is in a buzz. Miss Abercrombie says nothing so unrespectable has happened in years. More power to Ellen . . . !"

For a moment Lily put down the letter and sat thinking. In the last sentence there was a delicious echo of that wicked chuckle which had marked the departure of the discomfited Judge Weissman and Mrs. Julis Harrison from Cypress Hill . . . the merest echo of triumph over another mark in the long score of the old against the new.

For a time Lily sat listening quietly to the distant sounds from the river . . . the whistling of the steamer bound for St. Cloud, the faint clop-clop of hoofs in the Rue de Passy and the ugly chug-chug of one of the new motor wagons which were to be seen with growing frequency along the boulevards. Whatever she was thinking, her thoughts were interrupted suddenly by a little boy, very handsome and neat, in a sailor suit, who dragged behind him across the flagged terrace a stuffed toy bear. He climbed into her lap and began playing with the warm fur piece she had thrown over her shoulders.

"Mama," he cried. "J'ai faim. . . . Je veux un biscuit!"

Lily gathered him into her arms, pressing his soft face against hers. "Bien, petit . . . va chercher la bonne Madame Gigon."

She seized him more closely and kissed him again and again with all the passion of a savage, miserly possession.

"Je t'aime, Mama . . . tellement," whispered the little fellow, and climbed down to run into the big house in search of kind Madame Gigon and her cakes. The gaze of Lily wandered after his sturdy little body and her dark eyes grew bright with a triumphant love.

When he had disappeared through one of the tall windows, she took up the letter once more and continued her reading.

"Irene," wrote her mother, "seems more content now that you are gone. I confess that I understand her less and less every day. Sometimes I think she must be not quite well . . . a little touched perhaps by a religious mania. She is giving her life, her strength, her soul, to these foreigners in the Flats.

What for? Because it brings her peace, I suppose. But still I cannot understand her. There is one man . . . Krylenko, by name, I believe, whom she has made into a sort of disciple. I only hope that news of him won't reach the Town. God knows what sort of a tale they would make out of it. I'm afraid too of her becoming involved in the troubles at the Mills. Some day there will be open warfare in the Flats."

When Lily had finished reading, she tore the letter slowly into bits after a custom of long standing and tossed the torn fragments into one of the stone urns that bordered the terrace. . . . Then she rose and pulling her fur cloak closer about her began to walk up and down restlessly as if some profound and stirring memory had taken possession of her. The rain began to fall gently and darkness to descend upon the garden. In the house behind her the servants lighted the lamps. Still she paced up and down tirelessly.

After a time she went down from the terrace to the gravel path of the garden and there continued her walking until the gate in the garden wall opened suddenly and a man stepped in, his erect soldierly figure black against the lamps of the Rue de Passy. It was the Baron, Madame Gigon's cousin. He came toward her quickly and took her into his arms, embracing her passionately for a long time in silence.

When at last he freed her, a frown crossed his dark face, and he said, "What is it? What is distracting you? Are you troubled about something?"

Lily thrust her arm through his and leaned against him, but she avoided his gaze. "Nothing," she said. "It's nothing."

And thus they walked through the rain until they reached the pavilion designed by Lenôtre which stood at a distance from the house. Here they halted and the Baron, taking from his pocket a key, unlocked the door and they went in silently.

Once inside, he kissed her again and presently he said, "What is it? There is something between us. There is a difference."

"Nothing," she murmured stubbornly. "It is nothing. You must be imagining things."

XXXI

ALL that Julia Shane had written her daughter was true enough. The escapade of Ellen shocked the Town, not altogether unwillingly however, for it opened a new field for talk and furnished one more evidence of the wildness of a family which had never been content with conformity, a clan which kept bursting its bonds and satisfying in a barbarous fashion its hunger after life.

When Hattie Tolliver, tearful and shaken, came to her aunt for consolation, Julia Shane received her in the vast bedroom she occupied above the Mill yard. The old woman said, "Come, Hattie. You've no reason to feel badly. Ellen is a good girl and a wise one. It's the best thing that could have happened, if you'll only see it in that light."

But Mrs. Tolliver, so large, so energetic, so emotional, was hurt. She kept on sobbing. "If only she had told me! . . . It's as if she deceived me."

At which Julia Shane smiled quietly to herself. "Ah, that's it, Hattie. She couldn't have told you, because she knew you so well. She knew that you couldn't bear to have her leave you. The girl was wise. She chose the better way. It's your pride that's hurt and the feeling that, after all, there was something stronger in Ellen than her love for you." She took the red work-stained hand of her niece in her thin, blue-veined one and went on, "We have to come to that, Hattie . . . all of us. It's only natural that a time comes when children want to be free. It's like the wild animals . . . the foxes and the wolves. We aren't any different. We're just animals too, helpless in the rough hands of Nature. She does with us as She pleases."

But Mrs. Tolliver continued to sob helplessly. It was the first time in her life that she had refused to accept in the end what came to her.

"You don't suppose I wanted Lily to go and live in Paris?"

You don't suppose I wanted to be left here with Irene who is like a changeling to me? It's only what is bound to come. If Lily *did* help Ellen it was only because all youth is in conspiracy against old age. All children are in a conspiracy against their parents. When we are old, we are likely to forget the things that counted so much with us when we were young. We take them for granted. We see them as very small troubles after all, but that's because we are looking at them from a long way off. 'The old are selfish, Hattie . . . more selfish than you imagine. They envy even the life and the hunger of the young.'

For a moment the old woman paused, regarding her red-eyed niece silently. "No," she continued presently, "You don't understand what I've been saying, yet it's all true . . . as true as life itself. Besides, life is hard for our children, Hattie. It isn't as simple as it was for us. Their grandfathers were pioneers and the same blood runs in their veins, only they haven't a frontier any longer. They stand . . . these children of ours . . . with their backs toward this rough-hewn middle west and their faces set toward Europe and the East. And they belong to neither. They are lost somewhere between."

But Mrs. Tolliver understood none of this. With her there were no shades of feeling, no variations of duty. To her a mother and child were mother and child whether they existed in the heart of Africa or in the Faubourg St. Germain. After tea she went home, secretly nursing her bruised heart. She told her husband that no woman in the world had ever been called upon to endure so much.

As for Charles Tolliver, his lot was not the happiest. At the next election, despite the money which old Julia Shane poured into his campaign, he was defeated. His ruin became a fact. The Mills were too strong. The day of the farmer was past. After floundering about helplessly in an effort to make ends meet, he took at last a place as clerk in one of the banks controlled by his enemy Judge Weissman . . . a cup of humiliation which he drank for the sake of his wife and children, goaded by the sheer necessity of providing food and shelter for them. So he paid for his error, not of honesty but of judgment. Because he was honest, he was sacrificed to the

Mills. He settled himself, a man of forty-five no longer young, behind the brass bars of the Farmer's Commercial Bank, a name which somehow carried a sense of irony because it had swallowed up more than one farm in its day.

In the Town tremendous changes occurred with the passing of years. There was a panic which threatened the banks. There were menacing rumors of violence and discontent in the Flats; and these things affected the Town enormously, as depressions in the market for wheat and cattle had once affected it. No longer was there any public market. On the Square at the top of Main Street, the old scales for weighing hay and grain were removed as a useless symbol of a buried past, a stumbling block in the way of progress. Opposite the site once occupied by the scales, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks purchased the Grand Western Hotel and made it into a club house with a great elk's head in cast iron over the principal doorway. Through its windows, it was possible in passing to see fat men with red faces, coats off and perspiring, while they talked of progress and prosperity and the rising place of the Town among the cities of the state. One by one the old landmarks of the Square vanished, supplanted by "smoke-houses," picture palaces with fronts like frosted pastries, candy shops run by Greeks, a new element in the growing alien population of the Town. On the far side of the square the tower of the courthouse, itself a monument to graft, was at last completed to the enrichment of Judge Weissman and other politicians who had to do with the contract.

In the early evening after the sun had disappeared, the figure of the Judge himself might be seen, ambulating about the square, hugging the shadows; for the heat was bad for a man so red-faced and apoplectic. For all his avoidance of the sun, he walked arrogantly, with the air of one proud of his work. When he had tired of the promenade, it was his custom to return to the Elks' club to squeeze his body between the arms of a rocking chair and sit watching the passers-by and the noisy bustle of trade. At such moments one might hear the sound of money dripping into tills as one heard the distant sound of the Mills which in the evening penetrated as far as the square itself. He gloated openly over the prosperity to which he had

contributed so much. He went his way, petty, dishonest, corrupt . . . traits which even his enemies forgave him because he had "done so much to make the Town what it was." Not since the piggish obstinacy of Charles Tolliver had he been thwarted, and even in the matter of the taxes the sympathy of the Town had been on his side, because the decision in the case had delayed the building of new furnaces for more than two years and thus halted the arrival of hundreds of new alien workers who would have made the Town the third largest in the state. Charles Tolliver, most people believed, had been piggish and obstinate. He had put himself between his own Town and its booming prosperity.

XXXII

IN the Flats, as the years passed, new tides of immigrants swept in, filling the abominable dirty houses to suffocation, adding to the garbage and refuse which already clogged the sluggish waters of the Black Fork. The men worked twelve hours and sometimes longer in the Mills. The women wore shawls over their heads and bore many children, most of whom died amid the smoke and filth. Here the Town overlooked one opportunity. With a little effort it might have saved the lives of these babies to feed to the Mills later on; but it was simpler to import more cheap labor from Europe. Let those die who could not live.

And none of these new residents learned to speak English. They clung to their native tongues. They were simply colonists transplanted, unchanged and unchanging, from Poland, Ukrainia, South Italy and the Balkans—nothing more, nothing less. The Town had nothing to do with them. They were pariahs, outcasts, "Hunkies," "Dagos," and the Town held it against them that they did not learn English and join in the vast chorus of praise to prosperity.

But trouble became more frequent nowadays. Willie Harrison no longer dared take his exercise by walking alone up the hill to the Town. The barricade of barbed wire was complete now. It surrounded the Mills on all sides, impregnable, menacing. It crowded the dead hedges of *arbor vitæ* that enclosed the park at Shane's Castle. There had been no need for it yet. It was merely waiting.

Welcome House, the tentative gesture of a troubled civic conscience, went down beneath the waves of prosperity. Volunteer citizens no longer ventured into the troubled area of the Flats. Money ceased to flow in for its support. It dropped at length from the rank of an institution supported by a community to the rank of a school supported by one woman and

one man. The woman was Irene Shane. The man was Stepan Krylenko. The woman was rich. The man was a Mill worker who toiled twelve hours a day and gave six hours more to the education of his fellow workers.

The years and the great progress had been no more kind to Irene than they had been to the Town. She aged . . . dryly, after the fashion of spinsters who have diverted the current of life from its wide course into a single narrow channel of feverish activity. She grew thinner and more pale. There were times when the blue veins showed beneath the transparent skin like the rivers of a schoolboy's map. Her pale blond hair lost its luster and grew thin and straight, because she had not time and even less desire to care for it. Her hands were red and worn with the work she did in helping the babies of the Flats to live. She dressed the same, always in a plain gray suit and ugly black hat, which she replaced when they became worn and shabby. But in replacing them, she ignored the changing styles. The models remained the same, rather outmoded and grotesque, so that in the Town they rewarded her for her work among the poor by regarding her as queer and something of a figure of fun.

Yet she retained a certain virginal look, and in her eye there was a queer exalted light. Since life is impossible without compensations of one sort or another, it is probable that Irene had her share of these. She must have found peace in her work and satisfaction in the leader she molded from the tow haired boy who years before had shouted insults at her through the wrought iron gates of Shane's Castle.

For Krylenko had grown into a remarkable man. He spoke English perfectly. He worked with Irene, a leader among his own people. He taught the others. He read Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and even Voltaire . . . books which Irene bought him in ignorance of their flaming contents. At twenty-five Stepan Krylenko was a leader in the district, and in the Town there were men of property who had heard vaguely of him as a disturber, an anarchist, a madman, a Socialist, a criminal.

Although Irene seldom penetrated the Town any longer and her mother never left the confines of Shane's Castle, their

affairs still held an interest for those who had known Cypress Hill in the days of its vanished splendor. For women who had long since ceased to take any part in the life of a community, the names of old Julia Shane and her two daughters came up with startling frequency at the dinners and lunches and tea parties in the Town. It may have been that in a community where life was so noisy, so banal, so strenuous, so redolent of prosperity, the Shanes and the old house satisfied some profound and universal hunger for the mysterious, the beautiful, the bizarre, even the mystic. Certainly in the midst of so materialistic a community the Shanes were exotic and worthy of attention. And always in the background there was the tradition of John Shane and the memories of things which it was whispered had happened in Shane's Castle. It was Lily who aroused the most talk, perhaps because she was even more withdrawn and mysterious than her mother and sister, because it was so easy to imagine things about her. . . . Lily who could come back and bring all the Town once more to Shane's Castle; Lily, the generous, the good-natured, the beautiful Lily.

Mrs. Julis Harrison discussed them; and her son, the rejected Willie; and Miss Abercrombie, who with the passing of years had developed an affection of the nerves which made her face twitch constantly so that always, even in the midst of the most solemn conversations, she had the appearance of winking in a lascivious fashion. It was a trial which she bore, with a truly noble fortitude.

XXXIII

ON the evening of the day that Mrs. Harrison called for the last time at Cypress Hill, Miss Abercrombie was invited to dine with her in the ugly sandstone house on the Hill. The call was Mrs. Harrison's final gesture in an effort to patch up the feud which had grown so furiously since the affair over the taxes. Of its significance Miss Abercrombie had been told in advance, so it must have been with a beating, expectant heart that she arrived at the Harrison mansion.

The two women dined alone in a vast dining-room finished in golden oak, beneath a gigantic brass chandelier fitted with a score of pendant brass globes. They sat at either end of a table so long that shouting was almost a necessity.

"William is absent," explained Mrs. Harrison in a loud, deep voice. "There is a big corporation from the east that wants to buy the Mills. It wants to absorb them at a good price with a large block of stock for William and me. Of course, I oppose it . . . with all my strength. As I told William, the Mills *are* the Harrisons . . . I will never see them out of the family . . . Judge Weissman has gone east with William to see that he does nothing rash. Neither of them ought to be away, I told Willie, with all this trouble brewing in the Flats." Here she paused for a long breath. "Why, only this afternoon, some of those Polish brats threw stones at my victoria, right at the foot of Julia's drive. . . . Imagine that in the old days!"

This long and complicated speech, she made with but a single pause for breath. She had grown even more stout, and her stupendous masculine spirit had suffered a certain weakening. A light stroke of paralysis she had passed over heroically, dismissing it by sheer force of her tremendous will. The misfortune left no trace save a slight limp as she dragged her body

across the floor and settled it heavily in the plush covered arm chair at one end of the table.

The butler—Mrs. Harrison used a butler as the symbol of her domination in the Town, wearing him as a sort of crest—noiselessly brought the thick mushroom soup, his eye gleaming at the sight of the two women. He was an old man with white hair and the appearance of a gentleman.

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Miss Abercrombie, and then unable longer to restrain herself, she said, "Tell me! Do tell me about Julia!"

Mrs. Harrison drank from her water glass, set it down slowly and then said impressively, "She did not receive me!"

"I feared so," rejoined Miss Abercrombie, winking with nervous impatience.

"It is the end! No one can say that I have not done my part toward a reconciliation." This statement she uttered with all the majesty of an empress declaring war. "And to think," she added mournfully, "that such an old friendship should come to such an end."

"It's just the way I feel," replied Miss Abercrombie. "And you know, my friendship was even older. I knew her before you. Why, I can remember when she was only a farmer girl." Here her illness forced her to wink as if there were something obscene in her simple statement.

"Well," said Mrs. Harrison, "I don't suppose any one in the Town was ever closer to Julia than I was. D'you know? That mulatto woman actually turned me away today, and I must say her manner was insolent. She said Julia was not feeling well enough to see me. Imagine, not well enough to see *me*, her oldest friend!" This statement the sycophantic Miss Abercrombie allowed to pass unchallenged. "Heaven knows," continued Mrs. Harrison. "It was only friendship that prompted me. I certainly would not go prying about for the sake of curiosity. You know that, Pearl. Why, I wasn't allowed to set my foot inside the door. You'd have thought I was diseased."

After this a silence descended during which the room vibrated with unsaid things. At the memory of her reception,

Mrs. Harrison's face grew more and more flushed. The gentlemanly butler removed the soup and brought on whitefish nicely browned and swimming in butter.

"It's a queer household," remarked Miss Abercrombie, with an air of hinting at unspeakable things and feeling her way cautiously toward a letting down of all bars. Undoubtedly it was unfortunate that they had disputed the position of "oldest friend." In a way it tied both their hands.

"It has always been queer," replied the hostess. "Even since the house was built."

Again a pregnant silence, and then Miss Abercrombie with another unwilling and obscene wink added, "I must say I can't understand Irene's behavior." About this effort, there was something oblique and yet effective. It marked another step.

"Or Lily's," rejoined Mrs. Harrison, taking a third step.

"They say," said Miss Abercrombie, pulling fishbones from her mouth, "that there is a common mill worker who is very attentive to Irene. Surely she can't be considering marriage with *him*."

"No, from what I hear, she *isn't*," observed Mrs. Harrison. After this dark hint she paused for a moment tottering upon the edge of new revelations with the air of a swimmer about to dive into cold water. At last she plunged.

"They say," she murmured in a lowered voice, "that there is more between them than most people guess . . . more than is proper."

Miss Abercrombie leaned forward. "You know," she said, "that's funny. I've heard the same thing."

"Well, I heard it from Thomas, the coachman. Of course, I reproved him for even hinting at such things. I must say he only hinted . . . very delicately. He was discreet. If I hadn't guessed there was something of the sort going on, I should never have known what he was driving at."

Miss Abercrombie bridled and leaned back for the butler to remove her fish plate. "Imagine!" she said, "Imagine a child of yours being the subject of gossip among servants!"

Her hostess gave a wicked chuckle. "You've forgotten John Shane. When he was alive, his behavior was the talk of

every one. But how could you have forgotten the talk that went the rounds? It was common property . . . common property."

Miss Abercrombie sighed deeply. "I know . . . I know. Julia's life has not been happy." And into the sigh she put a thousand implications of the superior happiness of virgins.

"Of course," said Mrs. Harrison, "he was insane. There's no doubt about it. People may talk, but facts are facts. John Shane was insane . . . certainly toward the end he was insane."

The butler brought the roast fowl, and until his back was turned once more both women kept silence. When he had gone out of the room, they found themselves striving for first place in the race. Both spoke at once but Mrs. Harrison overwhelmed the sycophantic Abercrombie.

"Of course," she said, "I think Julia herself is a little queer at times. I've noticed it for years . . . ever since . . . well . . . ever since Lily went to Paris to live."

"Yes," observed Miss Abercrombie, moving toward something more definite. "Ever since the Governor's garden party. All that was very queer . . . very queer."

Here again they found themselves halted by the immensity of the unspoken. Mrs. Harrison veered aside.

"The house has gone to ruin. Even the gate is hanging by one hinge. Nothing is kept up any longer."

"Have you seen this lover of Irene's?" asked Miss Abercrombie, calling a spade a spade and endeavoring to keep to one thing at a time.

"I've seen him once . . . William pointed him out to me at the Mills. He's one of the men who have been making trouble there."

"Is he good looking?" asked Miss Abercrombie.

"Yes and no," replied her companion.

"Well, what does that mean?"

"Well, he's tall and has a handsome face . . . a little evil perhaps. The real trouble is that I should call him common. Yes, common is the word I should use, decidedly common."

Miss Abercrombie raised her eyebrows and smiled. "But, my dear, after all he is nothing but a workman."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Harrison, "he *is*." In a manner which put an end to all doubt in the matter.

"Do you really think," asked Miss Abercrombie, "that there is anything in it?"

Mrs. Harrison poised her fork and gave her guest a knowing look. "Well, of course I can't see what he sees in her . . . pale and haggard as she is. Now with him it's different. He's . . . well." She halted suddenly, adding, "This fowl is tough, Pearl . . . I'm sorry it happened when you were dining with me." And then, "I suppose it's money he's after. She must be very rich."

The butler, after bringing more rich food, disappeared again and this time, Miss Abercrombie, casting to the winds all restraint, rose and said, "I'm going to bring my chair nearer, Belle. I can't talk all the way from this end of the table."

And she moved her chair and plate to a more strategic position so that when the butler returned, he found the two women sitting quite close to each other, their heads together, their voices lowered to the most confidential of pitches. Fragments of their talk reached an ear long trained to eavesdropping upon old women.

"But Lily is the one," drifted to the ear. "I'd really like to know the truth about her. Of course blood is thicker than water. They say she . . ." Mrs. Harrison rattled the ice in her glass, thus destroying the remainder of the sentence.

So they sat until near midnight—two old women, one of them at the end of a life barren of love, the other abandoned by love forever and cast aside, a slowly decaying mass of fat—pawing over the affairs of two women for whom the force of love in some manifestation or other was still a radiant reality. They knew nothing; they possessed only suspicions and fragments of gossip, but out of these they succeeded in patching together a mosaic which glowed with all the colors of the most glamorous sin and the most romantic passion.

XXXIV

AND at the same moment in the house at Cypress Hill, Julia Shane lay propped up in her bed reading a French novel. It was an enormous bed with a vast dusty canopy supported by two ironical wood-gilt cupids who hung suspended from the ceiling; and Julia Shane, reading by the light of her night lamp, appeared lost in it like a woman tossing on the waves of the sea. To-night, feeling more ill than usual, she had her dinner in bed, wrapped in a peignoir of mauve ribbon and valenciennes, her bony neck exposed above the linen of her night dress.

She read, as usual, with the aid of a silver mounted reading glass which tossed the sentences in enormous capitals well into the range of her fading vision. On the table beside her stood one of the gilt coffee cups, a mute witness to the old woman's disobedience of the doctor's orders. Beside it lay two paper backed French novels and on the floor in the shadow of the table a half dozen more tossed aside carelessly, some lying properly, others open and sprawled, exposing the ragged edges of the hastily cut pages.

In the fashion of the ill and aging, she lived nowadays in memories . . . memories of her girlhood when she had ridden John Shane's wildest mare Doña Rita recklessly about the paddock of the farm, memories of Mademoiselle Violette de Vaux and the picnics with French and English girls in a neatly kept wood at Sèvres, memories of Cypress Hill in the days immediately after her return when John Shane was still more the passionate lover than the husband. As she grew older, the memories became clearer and more vivid, but they were neither vivid nor diverse enough to occupy all her time. What remained she divided between the game of patience and the French novels which Lily supplied faithfully, shipping them from Paris in lots of a dozen at a time.

The old woman had evolved her own scheme of reading, a plan which Irene condemned by the word "skimming," but which satisfied Julia Shane because it revealed the plot without an unnecessary waste of time over long, involved descriptions of scenery and minute analyses of incomprehensible Gallic passions. Under the skimming system she read a few pages at the beginning and then turned to the end to learn the outcome of the tale. After this, she plunged into the middle of the book and read a page or two here and there until her curiosity was satisfied and her interest flagged. And at last the book was tossed aside to be carried off by the mulatto woman, who never failed to go through each volume carefully as though by looking at the words frequently enough she would be able at length to unlock the secrets of foreign tongues. The books which lay on the floor beside the bed had been "skimmed." They lay prostrate and sprawled like the dead soldiers of an army. The titles served as an index of the old woman's favorite authors. They appeared some in black ink, some in red, some even in blue . . . Paul Marguerite, Marcel Prévost, Pierre Loti, Paul Bourget, Collette Willy and, strange to relate, Anatole France represented by *L'Ile des Penguins* which, it seemed, had baffled the "skimming" system, for of all the lot it was the only volume in which every page had been cut.

After she grew weary, she tossed aside *Les Anges Gardiens* which she had been reading and sat leaning back with her eyes closed. Perhaps she pondered the doings of the four evil governesses in the Prévost tale; perhaps she turned her thoughts to the Town and Mrs. Julis Harrison whom she had sent away because she "was not in a mood to be bored." It is even possible that she knew at this very moment that in the sandstone house of the Harrisons, they were discussing her affairs. She was too wise and too worldly not to have known what Belle Harrison would say of her. Yet she appeared calm and content enough, completely indifferent to the opinions of her acquaintances, of the Town—indeed of all the world. She had reached the time when such things are no longer of any importance.

So great was her indifference that in more than three months she had left the house only once and then to follow the coffin

of Jacob Barr to the cemetery on the hill. The old man was dead at last, after an illness which had drained with a bitter, heart-breaking slowness all the vigor of his strong and energetic body. On the day of the funeral the foreign women in Halsted street caught a swift glimpse of the mistress of Cypress Hill as she drove through on her way to the cemetery. They must have guessed that it was an event of great importance which drew her from her seclusion; and indeed it was such an event, for it was the funeral of the oldest member of the family, the last of all his generation save Julia Shane.

And after the funeral Julia Shane returned and shut herself in, resolved to see no one but Irene and her niece, Hattie Tolliver.

XXXV

WHATEVER her thoughts and memories may have been, they were interrupted presently by the knock of the mulatto woman who came to bear away the gilt coffee cup and pile of ravaged novels. The sound of the woman's shuffling approach aroused Julia Shane who opened her eyes and said, "Here, Sarah. Give me a hand. I've slipped down."

Sarah helped lift her once more into a sitting posture. The old woman raised herself scornfully as if there was between her indomitable spirit and her wrecked body no bond of any sort, as if she had only contempt for the body as a thing unworthy of her, a thing which had failed her, over which she had neither control nor responsibility.

The mulatto woman bent to pick up the scattered novels, and as she stood up, her mistress, chuckling, said, "My God, They're tiresome, Sarah. They never write about anything but *l'amour*. You'd think there was nothing else in the world. Even *l'amour* gets to be a bore after a time."

The mulatto woman waited obediently. "Yes, Mis' Shane. I guess you're right," she said presently. At which the old woman smiled.

"And Sarah," the mistress continued. "When Miss Irene comes in, tell her I should like to see her. It's important."

The servant hesitated for an instant. "But Miss Irene don't come in till after midnight, Mis' Shane." She spoke with the manner of concealing something. In her soft voice there was a thin trace of insinuating suspicion, almost of servile accusation. "That foreign fella brings her home," she added.

"It's all right," replied the old woman. "I shall be awake." And then in a cold voice she added, "I'm sure it's good of him to bring her home. I shouldn't want her wandering about alone at that hour of the night. It's very thoughtful of him."

At midnight, true to her word, she was still awake. She had even managed to gain her feet painfully and to make her way with unsteady step across the room to the drawer which held her cigarettes. These too the doctor had forbidden her.

On the way back to her vast bed, she passed by the window and, drawing aside the curtain for a moment, she looked out over the hot panorama of glowing furnaces and tall black chimneys. As she stood there, she saw entering the wrought iron gates two figures sharply outlined against the glare of the white arc light in Halsted Street. The woman was Irene. She was accompanied by Krylenko.

Quietly the old woman extinguished the candle on the table beside her. The room became a vault of darkness. Beneath her window at the turn in the drive, the pair halted and stood talking in voices so low that what they said was inaudible even through the open window. After a time Irene seated herself wearily on the horseblock. Her frail body sagged with fatigue. She leaned against the cast iron Cupid who held in one outstretched hand an iron ring. Krylenko bent over her and his hands, with the curious, eloquent gestures of an alien, pantomimed their tale against the distant arc light. Above them in the recessed window the mother, clinging all the while to the heavy curtains for support, watched silently. She could hear nothing. She could only keep watch. At length Irene arose and lifting the ugly black hat from her head, ran her finger through her loose hair all damp with the terrible heat. Now was the moment. The old woman, awaiting proof, leaned against the table by her side.

But there was no proof. There was no embrace, not even the faintest exchange of intimacies. Krylenko chastely took Irene's hand, bade her good-night and turned with his swinging powerful stride down the long drive. Irene, passing along the gallery by the drawing room, slipped her key into the lock and entered the house.

Above stairs she found her mother sitting up in bed, lost again in the midst of *Les Anges Gardiens*. Still carrying the worn hat in her hand, the daughter came over to the bed. With the increasing illness of the old woman, Irene's manner had become more gentle. She even smiled a tired smile.

"What?" she said playfully. "Are you still awake? Skimming again, I see."

Yet her manner was not the manner of a daughter with a mother. Rather it was that of a casual friend. It was too playful, too forced. The chasm of thirty years and more was not to be bridged by any amount of strained cordiality.

Julia Shane put down her reading glass. "I couldn't sleep, so I tried to read," she said.

Irene drew up a chair and sat by the bed. She appeared worn and exhausted, as though the August heat had drained to the dregs all her intense, self-inspired vitality.

"How are you feeling?"

"Better . . . much better except for the ache in my back."

Irene's face grew serious. "You've been smoking again," she said, "after the doctor forbade you." The old woman, quite prepared to lie, started to protest, shaking her head in negation. "It's no use, Mama . . . I saw you . . . I saw the glow of your cigarette at the window."

(So Irene knew that she had been watched, and there was no need to protest.) The old woman sat still for a moment twisting the silver reading glass round and round, her brow contracted in an angry frown as though she resented bitterly the decay of body which gave any one authority over her. (That Julia Shane should ever take orders from a doctor or stand reproved by her own daughter!) It was this angry emotion that stood revealed and transparent in every line of her face, in the very defiance of her thin body. At length the frown melted slowly away.

"What sort of a man is he, Irene?" she asked looking straight into her daughter's tired eyes. Irene moved uneasily.

"What man?" she asked, "I don't know who you mean."

"That foreigner . . . I don't remember his name. You've never told me. . . . You might have told your mother." There was a note of peevishness in her voice which sounded queer and alien, almost a portent.

"Oh, Krylenko," said Irene, twisting her black hat with her thin hands. "Krylenko." Then she waited for a moment. "He's a fine man . . . a wonderful man. He has given up everything for his people."

"But they are not *your* people," observed her mother looking at her sharply.

"They are my people," replied Irene softly. "All of them down to the last baby. If they are not my people, who are?"

The old woman, opposed once more by the inevitable wall of Irene's obsessions, frowned. "You are wealthy," she said. "You were born to a position."

In Irene's smile there was a shade of bitterness. "In this Town?" she inquired scornfully. "Oh! No! Position in this Town! That's almost funny." She leaned forward a little, pressing her hand against her forehead. "My people?" she said in a hushed voice. "My people. . . . Why, I don't even know where my father came from."

The mother, half-buried among the heavy pillows raised herself slowly as if a wave of new vigor had taken possession of her worn-out body. "Get me a cigarette, Irene."

The girl opened her lips to protest, but her mother silenced her. "Please, Irene, do as I say. It can't possibly matter what I do now."

"Please, Mama," began Irene once more. "The doctor has forbidden it." Then Julia Shane gave her daughter a terrible look pregnant with all the old arrogance and power.

"Will you do as I say, Irene, or must I send for Sarah? She at least still obeys me."

For a second, authority hung in the balance. It was the authority of a lifetime grounded upon a terrific force of will and sustained by the eternal and certain precedent of obedience. It was the old woman who won the struggle. It was her last victory. The daughter rose and obediently brought the cigarettes, even holding the candle to light it. She held the flame at arm's length with a gesture of supreme distaste as if she had been ordered to participate in some unspeakable sin. After she had replaced the candle, her mother puffed thoughtfully for a time.

"Your father," she said presently, "was born in Marseilles. His mother was Spanish and his father Irish. He came to this country because he had to run away. That's all I know. He might have told me more if he had not died suddenly. It's not likely that any of us will ever know his story, no matter how hard we try. Life isn't a story book, you know."

In life there are some things that we never know, even about our own friends, our own children. Each man's soul is a secret, which even himself is not able to reveal."

For an instant the light of triumph swept Irene's pale countenance. "You see!" she said. "I am just like the rest . . . like Stepan Krylenko and all the others. My father was a foreigner."

The mother's lips curved in a sudden, scornful smile. "But he was a gentleman, Irene. . . . That is something. And your mother was an American. Her grandfather was the first settler in the wilderness. . . . The Town was named for him. Have you no pride?"

"No," replied Irene, "to be proud is a vice. . . . I have killed it. I am not proud. I am like all the others." And yet there was a fierce pride in her voice, a smug, fierce, pride in not being proud.

"You are perverse," said her mother. "You are beyond me. You talk like a fool. . . ." Irene raised her head to speak but the will of the old woman swept her back. "I know," she continued. "You think it is saintly. Does it ever occur to you that it might only be smugness?"

The old eyes flashed with anger and resentment, emotions which merely shattered themselves against the barrier of Irene's smiling and fanatic sense of righteousness. A look of obstinacy entered her face. (She regarded herself as superior to Julia Shane! Incredible!)

"You amaze me, Irene. Your hardness is beyond belief. If you could be soft for a moment, gentle and generous . . . like Lily."

The daughter's hands tightened about the battered old hat.

"It's always Lily," she said bitterly. "It's always Lily . . . Lily this and Lily that. She's everywhere. Every one praises her . . . even Cousin Hattie." The stubborn look of smugness again descended upon her face. "Well, let them praise her . . . I know that it is I who am right, I who am good in the sight of God." And then for the first time in all the memory of Julia Shane, a look of anger, cold and unrelenting came into the eyes of her daughter. "Lily! Lily!" she cried scornfully, "I hate Lily. . . . May God forgive me!"

XXXVI

THEN for a long time a silence descended upon the room. Julia Shane crushed out the embers of her cigarette and fell once more to turning the silver mounted reading glass round and round, regarding it fixedly with the look of one hypnotized. At last she turned again to her daughter.

"Are you going to marry him?" she asked.

"No, of course not."

"I should be satisfied, if he is as fine as you say he is. I would rather see you married before I die, Irene."

The daughter shook her head stubbornly. "I shall never marry any one."

The old woman smiled shrewdly. "You are wrong, my girl. You are wrong. I haven't had a very happy time, but I wouldn't have given it up. It is a part of life, knowing love and having children. . . . Love can be so many things, but at least it is part of life . . . the greatest part of all. Without it life is nothing."

For a long time Irene remained silent. She kept her eyes cast down and when she spoke again it was without raising them. "But Lily . . ." she began shrewdly. "She has never married." It was the old retort, always Lily. Her mother saw fit to ignore it, perhaps because, knowing what she knew, it was impossible to answer it.

"You've been seeing a great deal of this Krylenko," she said. "It's been going on for years . . . since before Lily was here the last time. That's years ago."

Irene looked up suddenly and a glint of anger lighted her pale eyes. "Who's been talking to you about me? . . . I know. It's Cousin Hattie. She was here to-day. Oh, why can't people let me alone? I harm no one. I want to be left in peace."

Then Julia Shane, perhaps because she already knew too well the antipathy between her coldly virginal daughter and her niece whose whole life was her children, deliberately lied.

"Cousin Hattie did not even mention it." She turned her eyes away from the light. "I would like to see you married, Irene," she repeated. It was clear that for some reason the old hope, forgotten since that tumultuous visit of the Governor, was revived again. It occupied the old woman's mind to the exclusion of all else.

"There is nothing between us, Mama," said Irene. "Nothing at all. Can't you see. We've been friends all along. I taught him to read English. I got him books." Her voice wavered a little and her hands trembled. It was as if she had become a little girl again, the same girl who, in a white muslin dress with a blue sash, sobbed alone on the sofa in the library beneath John Shane's portrait. "I've made him what he is," she continued. "Don't you see. I'm proud of him. When I found him, he was nothing . . . only a stupid Ukrainian boy who was rebellious and rude to me. And now he works with me. He's willing to sacrifice himself for those people. We understand each other. All we want is to be left alone. Don't you understand? I'm just proud of him because I've made him what he is. I'm nothing," she stammered. "I'm nothing to him in that way at all. That would spoil everything . . . like something evil, intruding upon us."

The pale tired face glowed with a kind of religious fervor. For an instant there was something maternal and exalted in her look. All the plainness vanished, replaced suddenly by a feverish beauty. The plain, exhausted old maid had disappeared.

"Why haven't you told me this before?" asked the old woman.

"You never asked me. . . . You never wanted to know what I was doing. You were always interested in Lily. How could you ever have thought I'd marry him? I'm years older." Suddenly she extended her arms with a curious exhibitve gesture like a gesture Lily sometimes made when she was looking her loveliest. "Look at me. I'm old and battered and ugly. How could he ever love me in that way? He is young."

The thin hands dropped listlessly into her lap and lay against the worn black serge. She fell silent, all exhausted by the emotion. Her mother stared at her with the look of one who has just penetrated the soul of a stranger. Irene, it appeared, was suddenly revealed to her.

"Why, you know he's never looked at a woman," Irene continued in a lowered voice. "He's lived in the Flats all these years and he's never looked at a woman. Do you know what that means in the Flats?" Her voice dropped still lower. "Of course, you don't know, because you know nothing about the Flats," she added with a shade of bitterness.

At this her mother smiled. "The rest of the world is not so different, Irene."

But Irene ignored her. "He's worked hard all these years to make himself worth while and to help his people. He's never had time to be bad." Her mother smiled faintly again. Perhaps she smiled at the spinsterish word by which Irene chose to designate fornication.

"He's pure," continued Irene. "He's fine and noble and pure. I want to keep him so."

"You are making of him a saint," observed the old woman drily.

"He is a saint! That's just what he is," cried Irene. "And you mock him, you and Lily. . . . Oh, I know . . . I know you both. He's been driven from the Mills for what he's done for the people in the Flats. He's been put on a black list so he can never get work in any other Mill. He told me so to-night. That's what he was telling me when you stood watching us." A look of supreme triumph came into her face once more. "But it's too late!" she cried. "It's too late. . . . They've voted to strike. It begins to-morrow. Stepan is the one behind it."

It was as if a terrible war, long hanging in the balance, had suddenly become a reality. Julia Shane, propped among the pillows, turned restlessly and sighed.

"What fools men are!" she said, almost to herself. "What fools!" And then to Irene. "It won't be easy, Irene. It'll be cruel. You'd best go to bed now, dear. You look desperately tired. You'll have plenty of work before you."

Irene pressed a cold, distant kiss on the ivory cheek of her mother and turned to leave.

"Shall I put out the light?"

"Yes, please."

The room subsided into darkness and Irene, opening the door, suddenly heard her mother's voice.

"Oh, Irene." The voice was weary, listless. "I've written for Lily to come home. The doctor told me to-day that I could not possibly live longer than Christmas. I forced it out of him. There was no use in having nonsense. I wanted to know."

And Irene, instead of going to her own room, returned and knelt by the side of her mother's bed. The hardness melted and she sobbed, perhaps because the old woman who faced death with such proud indifference was so far beyond the need of prayer and comfort.

Yet when the smoky dawn appeared at last, it found Irene in her own chaste room still kneeling in prayer before the pink and blue Sienna Virgin.

"Oh, Blessed Virgin," she prayed, from the summit of her complacency. "Forgive my mother her sins of pride and her lack of charity. Forgive my sister her weakness of the flesh. Enter into their hearts and make them good women. Make them worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Enter into the heart of my sister and cleanse her. Make her a good woman . . . a pure woman, loving only those things which are holy. Cleanse her of the lusts of the flesh!"

Her pale eyes were wet with tears. Although she prayed to a plaster Virgin in pink gilt, she used the sonorous rolling words drawn all unconsciously from the memories of a Presbyterian childhood. And the Lily for whom she prayed . . . the Lily who had been sent for . . . was there in the old house just as she was always in the Town and in the memories of those who knew her beauty, her tolerance and her charm. There were, indeed, times when Krylenko, caught perhaps in the memory of a night when he stood in the melting snow peering into the windows of Shane's Castle, spoke of her; and these were times when Irene turned away from him, frightened by the shadow of something in his eyes.

XXXVII

IT became known as the Great Strike and it served to mark an epoch. Long afterward people in the Town said, "It was the year of the Great Strike" as they said, "It was the year of the Spanish-American War" or "the year that Bryan was a candidate for the first time." Willie Harrison found a use for his enclosures of barbed wire and his heavily barricaded gates. As the strike progressed and the violence increased, other machines of warfare were set up . . . such things as machine guns and searchlights which at night fingered the Flats and the sky above with shafts of white light, rigid and unbending as steel.

In one sense the strike was a Godsend. When the Mills shut down there were no more fires in the ovens and the furnaces; no more soot fell in clouds like infernal snow over the low eminence of Cypress Hill and the squalid expanse of the Flats. For the first time in a score of years the sun became clearly visible. Instead of rising and setting as a ball of hot copper immersed in smoke, it appeared and disappeared quite clear and white, a sun such as God intended it to be. But even more remarkable was the blanket of silence which descended upon all the district. With the banking of the fires, there was no more hammering, and in place of the titanic clamor there was a stillness so profound and so unusual that people noticed it as people notice a sudden clap of loud thunder and remark upon it to each other. The silence became noisy.

In the house at Cypress Hill the world of Julia Shane narrowed from the castle itself to a single room and at last to the vast Italian bed. It was seldom that she gathered sufficient strength to struggle to her feet and make her way, leaning on the ebony and silver stick, to the window where the Mill yards and the Flats lay spread out beneath her gaze. During those last months she knew again the stillness which

enveloped the Cypress Hill of her youth. But there was a difference; the green marshes were gone forever, buried beneath the masses of cinders, clay and refuse upon which the Mills raised their sheds and towers and the Flats its flimsy, dirty, matchwood houses, all smoke stained and rotting at the eaves. The lush smell of damp growing things was replaced by the faint odor of crowded, sweating humanity. Not one slim cat-tail, not one feathery willow remained in all the desert of industry. There was, however, a sound which had echoed over the swamps almost a hundred years earlier, a sound which had not been heard since the days when Julia Shane's grandfather built about what was now the public square of the Town a stockade to protect the first settlers from the redskins. It was the sound of guns. Sometimes as she sat at the window, there arose a distant rat-tat-tat like the noise of a typewriter but more staccato and savage, followed by a single crack or two. She discovered at length the origin of the sound. In the Mill yard beneath her window a target had been raised, and at a little distance off men lay on their stomachs pointing rifles mounted upon tripods. Sometimes they fired at rusty buckets and old tin cans because these things did not remain stupid and inanimate like the target, but jumped and whirled about in the most tortured fashion when the bullets struck them, as though they had lives which might be destroyed. It made the game infinitely more fascinating and spirited. The men who indulged in this practise were, she learned from Hennerly, the hired guards whom the Harrisons and Judge Weissman had brought in to protect the Mills, riff-raff and off-scourings from the slums of New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

There came a day, after the sights and sounds of the Mill yard had become a matter of indifference to the old woman, when the doctor forbade her to leave her bed if she wished to survive the day set for Lily's arrival. It was October, and the park remained unchanged save that the atmosphere was less hot and the sun shone more clearly; for the trees and shrubs on the low hill were long since dead and far beyond the stage of sending out new leaves to fall at the approach of winter. It was bald now and very old. The brick house, dominating

all the horizon, stood out day after day gaunt and blackened by soot against the brilliant October sky.

Lily had been delayed. Before leaving Paris she wrote to her mother and Irene that it was necessary for her to take a small boy, the son of a friend, to England. After placing him in school there, she wrote, she would sail at once for America and come straight to Cypress Hill. There were also matters of business which might delay her; but she would not arrive later than the middle of November. So Julia Shane set herself to battling with Death, bent upon beating Him off until she had seen Lily once more.

XXXVIII

IN those days, because it was difficult and dangerous for any one to visit Cypress Hill and because, after all, no one had any particular reason to visit it, there was at the old house, only one caller beside the doctor. This was Hattie Tolliver, whose strength had given way a little to an increasing stoutness but whose pride and spirit flagged not at all. To the police and the hired guards at the Mills, she became as familiar a figure as the doctor himself. She came on foot, since all service on the clanging trolley cars of Halsted street was long since suspended, her large powerful body clad in black clothes of good quality, a basket suspended over one arm and the inevitable umbrella swinging from the other. She walked with a sort of fierce disdain directed with calculated ostentation alike at the Mill guards, the police, and the dwellers of the Flats who viewed her bourgeois approach with a sullen hostility. The basket contained delicacies concocted by her own skilled and housewifely hand . . . the most golden of custards, the most delicate of rennets, fragile biscuits baked without sugar—in short, every sort of thing which might please the palate of an invalid accustomed to excellent food.

In effect, Cypress Hill fell slowly into a state of siege. Surrounded on three sides by the barrier of barbed wire, the sole means of egress was the long drive turning into Halsted street. Here there was danger, for disorders occurred frequently at the very wrought iron gates, now rusted and broken. Stones were hurled by the strikers and shots fired by the police. The wagons of the Town no longer delivered goods at a spot so isolated and dangerous, and the duties of supplying the place with food came gradually to be divided between Irene and Hattie Tolliver, whose lack of friendliness and understanding toward each other approached an open hatred. They alone of the little garrison went in and out of the wrought iron gates;

for Hennery and the mulatto woman were far too terrified by the disorders outside ever to venture into the Town.

On the day of Lily's letter Hattie Tolliver, bearing a well-laden basket, arrived and went at once to Aunt Julia's room. She brooked no interference from the mulatto woman.

After bidding Sarah place the contents of the basket in a cool place she swept by the servant with a regal swish of black skirts.

Upstairs in the twilight Julia Shane lay in the enormous bed, flat on her back staring at the ceiling. At the approach of her niece she raised herself a little and asked in a feeble voice to be propped up. It was as though the approach of her vigorous rosy-faced niece endowed her with a sudden energy.

"And how are you?" asked Hattie Tolliver when she had smoothed the pillows with an expert hand and made the old woman more comfortable than she had been in many days.

"The same . . . just the same," was the monotonous answer. "Lily is a long time in coming."

Cousin Hattie went to the windows and flung back the curtains. "Light and air will do you good," she said. "There's nothing like light and air." And then turning, "Why don't you make Sarah keep the windows open?"

Julia Shane sat up more straightly, breathing in the crisp air. "I tell her to . . . but she doesn't like air," she said weakly.

"You let her bully you! She needs some one to manage her. I'm surprised Irene doesn't put her in her place."

The old woman smiled. "Irene," she said. "Irene . . . Why she's too meek ever to get on with servants. It's no use . . . her trying anything."

"I've brought you a custard and some cakes," continued her niece, at the same time flicking bits of dust from the dressing table with her handkerchief and setting the pillows of the chaise longue in order with a series of efficient pats. "There's going to be trouble . . . real trouble before long. The strikers are getting bolder."

"They're getting more hungry too, Irene says," replied the old woman. "Perhaps that's why."

Cousin Hattie came over to the bed now and sat herself

down, at the same time taking out a pillow-case which she set herself to hemming. "You know what they're saying in the Town," she remarked. "They're saying that Irene is helping the strike by giving the strikers money."

To this the old woman made no reply and Cousin Hattie continued. "I don't see the sense in that. The sooner every one gets to work, the better. It isn't safe in Halsted street any longer. I'm surprised at Irene helping those foreigners against the Harrisons. I didn't think she had the spirit to take sides in a case like this."

Julia Shane moved her weary body into a more comfortable position. "She doesn't take sides. She only wants to help the women and children. . . . I suppose she's right after all. . . . They are like the rest of us."

At this Cousin Hattie gave a grunt of indignation. "They didn't have to come to this country. I'm sure nobody wants 'em."

"The Mills want them," said her aunt. "The Mills want them and the Mills want more and more all the time."

"But I don't see why we have to suffer because the Mills want foreigners. There ought to be some law against it."

As though there seemed to be no answer to this, Julia Shane turned on her side and remarked. "I had a letter from Lily to-day."

Her niece put down the pillow case and regarded her with shining eyes. Her heavy body became alive and vibrant. "What did she say? Was there any news of Ellen? Shall I read it?"

"No, go on with your work. If you prop me a little higher and give me my glass, I'll read it."

This operation completed, she read the letter through. It was not until Ellen's name occurred that Cousin Hattie displayed any real interest. At the sound of her daughter's name, the woman put down her sewing and assumed an attitude of passionate listening.

"Ellen," ran the letter, "is doing splendidly. She is contented here and is working hard under Philippe. She plays better than ever . . . if that is possible, and plans to make her début in London next year. She has every reason to make a

great success. I am leaving her in my house when I come to America. She gets on beautifully with Madame Gigon. That was my greatest worry, for Madame Gigon has grown worse as she has grown older. But she has taken a fancy to Ellen . . . fortunately, so everything is perfect. Tell Cousin Hattie that one day she will be proud of her daughter."

Julia Shane, when she had finished, put down the letter, and regarded her niece. "You see, Hattie," she said, "there is no need to worry. Everything is going splendidly. Ellen couldn't be in better hands. Lily knows her way about the world a great deal better than most. Some day your daughter will be famous."

There came no response from her niece. Mrs. Tolliver sat upright and thoughtful. Presently she took up the pillow case and set to work again.

"These débuts," she said. "They cost money, don't they?"

"Yes," replied her aunt.

"Well where is Ellen to get it? Clarence's life insurance must all be gone by this time."

"I suppose Lily has found a way. Lily is clever. Besides Ellen isn't altogether helpless."

Again there was a thoughtful pause and the old woman said, "I don't think you'd be pleased if Ellen *was* a great success."

"I don't know. I'd be more pleased if I had her nearer to me. I don't like the idea of her being in Paris. It's not a healthy place. It's the wickedest city in the world."

"Come, Hattie. You mustn't forget Ellen was made to live in the world. You brought her up to be successful and famous. It's your fault if you have reason to be proud of her."

Into this single sentence or two Julia Shane managed to condense a whole epic. It was an epic of maternal sacrifices, of a household kept without servants so that the children might profit by the money saved, of plans which had their beginning even before the children were born, of hopes and ambitions aroused skilfully by a woman who now sat deserted, hemming a pillow-case to help dispel her loneliness. She had, in effect, brought about her own sorrow. They were gone now, Ellen to Paris, Fergus and Robert to New York. It was in their very

blood. All this was written, after all, in the strong proud face bent low over the pillow-case . . . an epic of passionate maternity.

"We have to expect these things of our children," continued Aunt Julia. "I'm old enough to know that it's no new story, and I've lived long enough to know that we have no right to demand of them the things which seem to us the only ones worth while. Every one of us is different from the others. There are no two in the least alike. And no one ever really knows any one else. There is always a part which remains secret and hidden, concealed in the deepest part of the soul. No husband ever knows his wife, Hattie, and no wife ever really knows her husband. There is always something just beyond that remains aloof and untouched, mysterious and undiscoverable because we ourselves do not know just what it is. Sometimes it is shameful. Sometimes it is too fine, too precious, ever to reveal. It is quite beyond revelation even if we chose to reveal it. . . ."

XXXIX

AT the close of this long speech, the old woman fell into a fit of coughing and her niece rose quickly to bring more medicine and water. If Hattie Tolliver had understood even for a moment these metaphysical theories, they were forgotten in the confusion of the coughing fit. It is more than probable that she understood nothing of the speech and probable that she was too far lost in thoughts of Ellen to have heard it. In any case, she was, like most good mothers and housewives, a pure realist who dealt in terms of the material. At least she gave no sign, and when the coughing fit was over, she returned at once to the main thread of the conversation.

"These careers," she said, "may be all right but I think that Ellen might be happier if she had something more sound . . . like a husband and children and a home."

It was useless to argue with her. Like all women whose domestic life has been happy and successful, she could not be convinced that there was anything in the world more desirable than the love of a good husband and children. With her it was indeed something even stronger—a tribal instinct upon which life itself is founded. She was a fundamental person beside whom Irene and Lily, even her own daughter Ellen, were sports in the biological sense. They were removed by at least two generations from the soil. In them the struggle for life had become transvalued into a pursuit of the arts, of religion, of pleasure itself.

In the gathering twilight, Hattie Tolliver brought a lamp and lighted it to work by. Julia Shane watched her silently for a time, observing the strong neck, the immaculate full curve of her niece's figure, the certainty with which the strong worn fingers moved about their delicate work.

"You remember," she said, "that Lily mentioned a boy . . . a young boy, in her letter?"

"Yes," replied Hattie Tolliver, without glancing from her work. "The child of a friend. I thought she might have passed him by to come home to her mother. . . . Funny how children can forget you."

Julia Shane stirred softly in the deep bed. "I thought you might be thinking that," she said. "I thought it would be better to tell you the truth. I wanted you to know anyway. The truth is, Hattie, that the child is her own. She is more interested in him than in me, and that's natural enough and quite proper."

The strong fingers paused abruptly in their work and lay motionless against the white linen. Hattie Tolliver's face betrayed her amazement; yet clearly she was a little amused.

"Charles always said there was something mysterious about Lily," she said. "But I never guessed she'd been secretly married."

The old woman, hesitating, coughed before she replied, as though the supremely respectable innocence of her niece somehow made her inarticulate. At last she summoned strength.

"But she's never been married, Hattie. There never was any ceremony."

"Then how . . ." In Mrs. Tolliver's face the amazement spread until her countenance was one great interrogation.

"Children," interrupted her aunt in a voice filled with tremulous calm, "can be born without marriage certificates. They have nothing to do with legal processes."

For a long time the niece kept silent, fingering the while the half finished pillow case. It appeared that she found some new and marvelous quality in it. She fingered the stuff as though she were in the act of purchasing it across a counter. At last she raised her head.

"Then it was true . . . that old story?" she asked.

"What story?"

"The one they told in the Town . . . about Lily's *having* to go away to Paris."

"Yes. . . . But no one ever really knew. They only guessed. They knew nothing at all. And they know nothing more to-day." The old woman paused for a second as though to give her words emphasis. "I'm trusting you never to tell,

Hattie. I wanted you to know because if ever it was necessary, I wanted Lily to come to you for help. It never will be. It isn't likely."

Hattie Tolliver sat up very stiff and red. "Tell!" she said, "Tell! Who should I ever tell in the Town? Why should I tell any of them?" The tribal instinct rose in triumph. It was a matter of her family against the Mills, the Town, all the world if necessary. Torture could not have dragged from her the truth.

Yet Hattie Tolliver was not unmoved by the confession. It may even have been that she herself long ago had suspicions of the truth which had withered and died since from too much doubt. To a woman of her nature the news of a thousand strikes, of murder and of warfare was as nothing beside the thing Julia Shane revealed. For a long time she said nothing at all, but her strong fingers spoke for her. They worked faster and more skilfully than ever, as if all her agitation was pouring itself out through their tips. The fingers and the flying needle said, "That this should have happened in our family! I can't believe it. Perhaps Aunt Julia is so sick that her mind is weakened. Surely she must imagine this tale. Such things happen only to servant girls. All this is unreal. It cannot be true. Lily could not be so happy, so buoyant if this were true. Sinners can only suffer and be miserable."

All this time she remained silent, breathing heavily, and when at last she spoke, it was to ask, "Who was the man?" in so terrible a voice that the old woman on the bed started for a moment and then averted her face lest her niece see the ghost of a smile which slipped out unwilling.

"It was the Governor," the aunt replied at last.

And then, "Why would he not marry her?" in a voice filled with accumulations of hatred and scorn for the ravishers of women.

This time Julia Shane did not smile. Her pride,—the old fierce and arrogant pride—was touched.

"Oh," she replied, "it was not that. It was Lily who refused to marry him. He begged her . . . on his knees he begged her. I saw him. He would have been glad enough to have her."

And this led only to a "Why?" to which the old woman answered that she did not know except that Lily had said she wished to be herself and go her own way, that she was content and would not marry him even if he became president. "Beyond that, I do not know," she said. "That is where a mother does not know even her own daughter. I don't believe Lily knows herself. Can you tell why it is that Ellen must go on studying and studying, why she cannot help it? Can I know why Irene wants only to be left in peace to go her own way? No, we never really know any one."

All this swept over the head of Hattie Tolliver. She returned to one thing. "It would not have been a bad match. He is a senator now."

It had grown quite dark during their talk and from inside the barrier of the Mills the searchlights began to operate, at first furtively and in jerky fashion and then slowly with greater and greater deliberation, sweeping in gigantic arcs the sky and the squalid area of the Flats. A dozen times in their course the hard white beams swept the walls of the barren old house, penetrating even the room where Julia Shane lay slowly dying. The flashes of light came suddenly, bathing in an unearthly glow and with a dazzling clarity the walls and the furniture. At last, as the beams swept the face of the ormolu clock, Hattie Tolliver, rising, folded her pillow case and thrust it into the black bag she carried.

"I must go now," she said. "Charlie will be wanting his supper."

The old woman asked her to bend down while she kissed her. It was the first time she had ever made such a request and she passed over the extraordinary event by hastily begging her niece to draw the curtains.

"The lights make me nervous," she said. "I don't know why, but they are worse than the noise the Mills used to make."

And when this operation was completed she summoned her niece again to her side. "Would you like to see a picture of Lily's boy?"

Hattie Tolliver nodded.

"It is in the top drawer of the chiffonier. Will you fetch it to me?"

Her niece brought the picture and for a time the two women regarded it silently. It was the photograph of a handsome child, singularly like Lily although there was something of the Governor's rather florid good looks, particularly about the high sweeping forehead.

"He is a fine child, isn't he?" the old woman remarked. "I never expected to have a grandchild named Shane."

Still regarding the picture with a sort of fascination, Mrs. Tolliver replied, "He is a darling, isn't he? Does she call him that?"

"Of course. What would she call him?"

"Yes, he is a fine lad. He looks like our family." And then after a long pause she added, "I'm glad you told me all the story. I'm glad Lily did what she did deliberately. I should hate to think that any of us would be weak enough to let a man take advantage of her. That makes a great difference."

After she had put on her small black hat trimmed with worn and stubby ostrich plumes, she turned for the last time. "If you have another of those pictures, Aunt Julia, I would like to have one. I'd like to show it to Charles. He's always admired Lily. It's funny what a way she has with men."

There was no sting in the remark. It was a simple declaration, spoken as though the truth of it had occurred to her for the first time. She was too direct and vigorous to be feline.

As she closed the door the voice of her aunt trailed weakly after. "You needn't worry about Ellen. All her strength and character is your strength and character, Hattie. She can take care of herself."

The niece turned in the doorway, her thick strong figure blocking the shower of dim light from the hall. "No," she said. "It's not as though Lily were bad. She isn't bad. I've always had an idea that she knew what she was about. I suppose she has her own ideas on life. Perhaps she lives up to them. I can't say they're my ideas." For a second she leaned against the frame of the door, searching with an air of physical effort for words to express her thoughts. "No, she isn't bad," she continued. "No one who ever knew her can say

she is a bad woman. I can't explain what I mean, but I suppose she believes in what she does."

And with this wise and mysterious observation Mrs. Tolliver returned to the world of the concrete—her own world—swept down the long stairway and into the kitchen where she reclaimed her basket, and left the house without waiting for the hostile mulatto woman to open the door.

XL

PERHAPS because she was so dazed and fascinated by the story which Julia Shane had poured into her astonished ears, she walked in a sort of dream to the foot of the long drive where she found herself suddenly embroiled in a waking nightmare. On all sides of her there rose a great tumult and shouting. Stones were thrown. Cries rang out in barbaric tongues. Men struggled and fought, and above the men on foot rose the figures of the constabulary mounted on wild and terrified horses who charged and curvetted as their masters struck about them with heavy clubs.

Through all this, Hattie Tolliver passed with an air of the most profound detachment and scorn, somewhat in the manner of a great sea-going freighter riding the waves of an insignificant squall. She carried her head high, despising the Irish constabulary as profoundly as she despised the noisy alien rabble. Clearly it was none of her affair. This embroiled rabble had nothing to do with her, nothing to do with her family, nothing to do with her world. The riot was as nothing beside the tale that kept running through her mind, blinding her senses to all the struggle that took place at her very side.

And then, suddenly and without warning, the crack of a pistol tore the air; then another and another, and there fell at the feet of Hattie Tolliver, completely blocking her overwhelming progress, the body of a swarthy man with heavy black mustaches. Before she was able to move, one of the constabulary, rushing up, kicked the prostrate body of the groaning man.

But he did not kick twice, for he was repulsed a second later by the savage thrust in the stomach from the umbrella of Mrs. Tolliver who, rushing to the attack, cried out, "Get away, you filthy brute! . . . You dirty coward!"

And the trooper, seeing no doubt that she was not one of the

foreigners, retired sheepishly before the menace of the angry mob to join his fellows.

The basket and umbrella were cast aside and Mrs. Tolliver, bending over the writhing man, searched for the wound. When she looked up again she found, standing over her, the gigantic steel worker who she knew was Irene's friend. She did not know his name.

"Here," she said, with the manner of a field marshal. "Help me get this fellow into the house over there."

Without a word, Krylenko bent down, picked up the stricken workman and bore him, laid across his brawny shoulders, into the corner saloon whither Hattie Tolliver with her recovered basket and umbrella followed him, surrounded by a protecting phalanx of excited and gibbering strikers.

The saloon was empty, for all the hangers-on had drifted long before into the streets to watch the riot from a safe distance. But the electrical piano kept up its uncanny uproar playing over and over again, Bon-Bon Buddy, the Chocolate Drop and I'm Afraid to go Home in the Dark.

There on the bar, among the empty glasses, Krylenko laid the unconscious striker and Hattie Tolliver, with the scissors she had used but a moment before in hemstitching a pillow-case, cut away the soiled shirt and dressed the wound. When her work was done she ordered Krylenko to take down one of the swinging doors and on this the strikers bore the wounded man to his own house.

When the little procession had vanished around a corner, Mrs. Tolliver brushed her black clothes, gathered up her basket and umbrella and set out up the hill to the Town. It was the first time she had ever set foot inside an establishment which sold intoxicating liquors.

Behind her in the darkened room at Cypress Hill, the sound of shots and cries came distantly to Julia Shane as through a high impenetrable wall, out of another world. At the moment she was alive in a world of memories, a world as real and as tangible as the world of the Mills and the Flats, for the past may be quite as real as the present. It is a vast country full of trees and houses, animals and friends, where people may go on having adventures as long as they live. And the sounds

she heard in her world bore no relation to the sounds in sordid Halsted street. They were the sounds of pounding hoofs on hard green turf, and the cries of admiration from a little group of farmers and townspeople who leaned on the rail of John Shane's paddock while his wife, with a skilful hand sent his sleek hunter Doña Rita over the bars—first five, then six and last of all and marvelous to relate, a clean seven!

A stained and dusty photograph slipped from her thin fingers and lost itself among the mountainous bedclothing which she found impossible to keep in order. It was the portrait of a youngish man with a full black beard and eyes that were wild, passionate, adventurous . . . the portrait of John Shane, the lover, as he returned to his wife at the school of Mademoiselle Violette de Vaux at St. Cloud on the outskirts of Paris.

XLI

AS Julia Shane grew weaker, it was Cousin Hattie Tolliver who "took hold" of the establishment at Shane's Castle. It was always Mrs. Tolliver, capable and housewifely, who "took hold" in a family crisis. She managed funerals, weddings and christenings. Cousins came to die at her shabby house in the Town. She gathered into her large strong hands the threads of life and death that stretched themselves through a family scattered from Paris to Australia. Her relatives embroiled themselves in scrapes, they grew ill, they lost or made fortunes, they succumbed to all the weaknesses to which the human flesh is prone; and always, at the definitive moment, they turned to Hattie Tolliver as to a house built upon a rock.

Irene, so capable in succoring the miserable inhabitants of the Flats, grew helpless when death peered in at the tall windows of Shane's Castle. Besides, she had her own work to do. As the strike progressed she came to spend days and nights in the squalid houses of Halsted street, returning at midnight to inquire after her mother. She knew nothing of managing a house and Hattie Tolliver knew these things intimately. More than that, Mrs. Tolliver enjoyed "taking hold"; and she extracted, beyond all doubt, a certain faintly malicious satisfaction in taking over the duties which should have fallen upon Irene, while Irene spent her strength, her very life, in helping people unrelated to her, people who were not even Americans.

So it was Hattie Tolliver, wearing a spotless apron and bearing a dustcloth, who opened the door when Hennerly, returning from his solitary and heroic venture outside the gates, drove Lily up from the dirty red brick station, bringing this time no great trunks covered with gay labels of Firenze and Sorrento but a pair of black handbags and a small trunk neatly strapped. It may have been that Hennerly, as Irene hinted

bitterly, made that perilous journey through the riots of Halsted street only because it was Mis' Lily who was returning. Certainly no other cause had induced him to venture outside the barren park.

The encounter, for Hattie Tolliver, was no ordinary one. From her manner it was clear that she was opening the door to a woman . . . her own cousin . . . who had lived in sin, who had borne a child out of wedlock. Indeed the woman might still be living in sin. Paris was a Babylon where it was impossible to know any one's manner of living. Like all the others, Mrs. Tolliver had lived all her life secure in the belief that she knew Lily. She remembered the day of her cousin's birth . . . a snowy blustering day. She knew Lily throughout her childhood. She knew her as a woman. "Lily," she undoubtedly told herself, "was thus and so. If any one knows Lily, I know her." And then all this knowledge had been upset suddenly by a single word from Lily's mother. It was necessary to create a whole new pattern. The woman who stood on the other side of the door was not Lily at all—at least not the old Lily—but a new woman, a stranger, whom she did not know. There might be, after all, something in what Aunt Julia said about never really knowing any one.

All this her manner declared unmistakably during the few strained seconds that she stood in the doorway facing her cousin. For an instant, while the two women, the worldly and the provincial, faced each other, the making of family history hung in the balance. It was Mrs. Tolliver who decided the issue. Suddenly she took her beautiful cousin into her arms, encircling her in an embrace so warm and so filled with defiance of all the world that Lily's black hat, trimmed with camelias, was knocked awry.

"Your poor mother!" were Cousin Hattie's first words. "She is very low indeed. She has been asking for you."

And so Lily won another victory in her long line of conquests, a victory which she must have known was a real triumph in which to take a profound pride.

Then while Lily took off her hat and set her fine hair in order, her cousin poured out the news of the last few days. It

was news of a sort that warmed the heart of Mrs. Tolliver . . . news of Julia Shane's illness delivered gravely with a vast embroidery of detail, a long account of the mulatto woman's insolence and derelictions which increased as the old woman grew weaker; and, last of all, an eloquent and denunciatory account of Irene's behavior.

"She behaves," said Mrs. Tolliver, "as though a daughter had no obligations toward her own mother." Her face grew scarlet with indignation at this flouting of family ties. "She spends all her time in the Flats among those foreigners and never sees her own mother more than a minute or two a day. There she lies, a sick and dying woman, grieving because her daughter neglects her. You'd think Irene loved the strikers more . . . especially one young fellow who is the leader," she added darkly.

Lily, knowing her mother, must have guessed that Cousin Hattie's account suffered from a certain emotional exaggeration. The picture of old Julia Shane, grieving because her daughter neglected her, was not a convincing one. The old woman was too self reliant for that sort of behavior. She expected too little from the world.

But Lily said nothing. She unstrapped her bag and brought out a fresh handkerchief and a bottle of scent. Then she raised her lovely head and looked sharply at her cousin. "I suppose it's this same Krylenko," she said. "D'you think she's in love with him?"

"No," replied Mrs. Tolliver shrewdly, "I don't think she loves anybody or anything but her own soul. She's like a machine. She has an idea she loves the strikers but that's only because she thinks she's saving her soul by good works. I suppose it makes her happy. Only yesterday I told her, thinking it would be a hint, that charity begins at home." For a moment Mrs. Tolliver waited thoughtfully, and then she added, "You know, sometimes Irene looks at her mother as if she wanted her to make haste with her dying. I've noticed the look—more than once."

And so they talked for a time, as people always talked of Irene, as if she were a stranger, a curiosity, something which stood outside the realm of human understanding. And out of

the ruin of Irene's character, Hattie Tolliver rose phoenix-like, triumphant, as the heroine who had seen Irene's duty and taken it upon herself.

"You know, I'm nursing your mother," she continued. "She wouldn't have a nurse because she couldn't bear to have a stranger in the house. She has that one idea now . . . seeing no one but the doctor and her own family. Now that you've come, I suppose she won't even see the doctor any more. She's asleep now, so I came down-stairs to put the house into some sort of order. Heaven knows what it would have been like if the drawing-room had been open too. That mulatto woman," she added bitterly, "hasn't touched a thing in weeks."

Silently, thoughtfully, Lily pushed open the double doors into the drawing-room.

"It's not been opened since you left," continued Mrs. Tolliver. "Not even for the Christmas party. But that wasn't necessary because there aren't many of us left. You could put all of us into the library. There's only Eva Barr and Charles and me. The old ones are all dead and the young ones have gone away." For a moment she paused, for Lily appeared not to be listening. Then she added softly, "But I guess you know all that. I'd forgotten Ellen was living with you."

For the time being, the conversation ended while the two women, Lily in her smart suit from the Rue de la Paix and Hattie Tolliver in shiny black alpaca with apron and dustcloth, stood in the doorway reverently surveying the vast old room, so dead now and so full of memories. The rosewood chairs, shrouded like ghosts, appeared dimly in the light that filtered through the curtained windows. In the far end, before the long mirror, the piano with its shapeless covering resembled some crouching, prehistoric animal. Above the mantelpiece, the flaming Venice of Mr. Turner glowed vaguely beneath layers of dust. Cobwebs hung from the crystal chandeliers and festooned the wall sconces; and beneath the piano the Aubusson carpet, rolled into a long coil, waited like a python. The room was the mute symbol of something departed from the Town.

Silently the two women regarded the spectacle and when

Lily at length turned away, her dark eyes were shining with tears. She was inexpressibly lovely, all softened now by the melancholy sight.

"I suppose it will never be opened again," observed Mrs Tolliver in a solemn voice. "But I mean to clean it thoroughly the first time I have an opportunity. Just look at the dust." And with her competent finger she traced her initials on the top of a lacquer table.

For a moment Lily made no reply. At last she said, "No. I suppose it is closed for good."

"You wouldn't come back here to live?" probed her cousin with an air of hopefulness.

"No. Why should I?" And a second later Lily added, "But how quiet it is. You can almost hear the stillness."

Mrs. Tolliver closed the door, seizing at the same time the opportunity to polish the knobs on the hallway side. "Yes, it's a relief not to hear the Mills. But there are other noises now . . . riots and machine guns, and at night there are search-lights. Only last night the police clubbed an old woman to death at the foot of the drive. She was a Polish woman . . . hadn't been harming any one. I wonder you didn't see the blood. It's smeared on the gates. Irene can tell you all about it." For a moment she polished thoughtfully; then she straightened her vigorous body and said, "But I got back at them. I gave one of the hired policeman a poke he won't soon forget. It's a crime the way they behave. . . . It's murder. No decent community would allow it." And she told Lily the story of the rescue at the corner saloon.

As Lily made her way up the long stairway, Mrs. Tolliver paused in her work to watch the ascending figure until it reached the top. Her large honest face was alive with interest, her eyes shining as if she now really saw Lily for the first time, as if the old Lily had been simply an illusion. The beautiful stranger climbed the stairs languidly, the long, lovely lines of her body showing through the trim black suit. Her red hair glowed in the dim light of the hallway. She was incredibly young and happy, so unbelievably fresh and lovely that Mrs. Tolliver, after Lily had disappeared at the turn of the stair, moved away shaking her head and making the clucking

sound which primitive women use to indicate a disturbance of their suspicions.

And when she returned to dusting the library under the handsome, malignant face of John Shane she worked in silence, abandoning her usual habit of humming snatches of old ballads. After the Ball was Over and The Baggage Coach Ahead were forgotten. Presently, when she had finished polishing the little ornaments of jade and crystal, she fell to regarding the portrait with a profound interest. She stood thus, with her arms akimbo, for many minutes regarding the man in the picture as if he too had become a stranger to her. She discovered, it appeared, something more than a temperamental and clever old reprobate who had been indulgent toward her. Her manner was that of a person who stands before a suddenly opened door in the presence of magnificent and incomprehensible wonders.

Lily found her there when she came down-stairs.

"You know," observed Mrs. Tolliver, "I must be getting old. I have such funny thoughts lately . . . the kind of thoughts a normal healthy woman doesn't have."

XLII

ROOM by room, closet by closet, Mrs. Tolliver and Lily put the big house in order. They even set Hennery to cleaning the cellar, and themselves went into the attic where they poked about among old boxes and trunks filled with clothing and photographs, bits of yellow lace and brocade for which no use had ever been found. There were photographs of Lily and Irene as little girls in tarlatan dresses much ornamented with artificial pansies and daisies; pictures of John Shane on the wrought iron piazza, surrounded by men who were leaders in state politics; dim photographs of Julia Shane in an extremely tight riding habit with a bustle, and a hat set well forward over the eyes; pictures of the annual family gatherings at Christmas time with all its robust members standing in the snow outside the house at Cypress Hill. There were even pictures of Mrs. Tolliver's father, Jacob Barr, on the heavy hack he sometimes rode, and one of him surrounded by his eight vigorous children.

From the sentimental Mrs. Tolliver, this collection wrenched a tempest of sighs. To Lily she said, "It's like raising the dead. I just can't believe the changes that have occurred."

The arrival of Lily brought a certain repose to the household. The mulatto woman who behaved so sulkily under the shifting dominations of the powerful Mrs. Tolliver and the anemic Irene, began slowly to regain her old respectful attitude. It appeared that she honored Miss Lily with the respect which servants have for those who understand them. Where the complaints of Irene and the stormy commands of Mrs. Tolliver had wrought nothing, the amiable smiles and the interested queries of Lily accomplished miracles. For a time the household regained the air of order and dignity which it had known in the days of Julia Shane's domination. Lily was unable to

explain her success. After all, there was nothing new in the process. Servants had always obeyed her in the same fashion. She charmed them whether they were her own or not.

Although her arrival worked many a pleasant change in the house and appeared to check for a time the inward sweeping waves of melancholy, there was one thing which she was unable, either consciously or unconsciously, to alter in any way. This was the position of Irene. The sister remained an outsider. It was as if the old dwelling were a rooming house and she were simply a roomer, detached, aloof . . . a roomer in whom no one was especially interested. She was, in fact, altogether incomprehensible. Lily, to be sure, made every effort to change the condition of affairs; but her efforts, it appeared, only drove her sister more deeply into the shell of taciturnity and indifference. The first encounter of the two sisters, for all the kisses and warmth of Lily, was an awkward and soulless affair to which Irene submitted listlessly. So apparent was the strain of the encounter that Mrs. Tolliver, during the course of the morning's work, found occasion to refer to it.

"You mustn't mind Irene's behavior," she said. "She has been growing queerer and queerer." And raising her eyebrows significantly she continued, "You know, sometimes I think she's a little cracked. Religion sometimes affects people in that way, especially the sort of popery Irene practises."

And then she told of finding Irene, quite by accident, prostrate before the pink-gilt image of the Virgin, her hair all disheveled, her eyes streaming with tears.

Once Mrs. Tolliver had reconciled herself to Lily's secret, her entire manner toward her cousin suffered a change. The awe which had once colored her behavior disappeared completely. She was no longer the provincial, ignorant of life outside the Town, face to face with an experienced woman of the world. She was one mother with an understanding for another. Before many days had passed the pair worked and gossiped side by side, not only as old friends might have gossiped but as old friends who are quite the same age, whose interests are identical. In her manner there was no evidence of any strangeness save in the occasional moments when she

would cease working abruptly to regard her lovely cousin with an expression of complete bewilderment, which did not vanish until Lily, attracted by her cousin's steady gaze, looked up and caused Mrs. Tolliver to blush as if it were herself who had sinned.

XLIII

IT was Lily who in the end mentioned the affair. She spoke of it as they sat at lunch in the paneled dining room. "Mama," she said suddenly, "tells me that you know all about Jean."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Tolliver, in a queer unearthly voice. "She told me."

"I'm glad, because I wanted to tell you before, only she wouldn't let me. She said you wouldn't understand."

There was an awesome little pause and Mrs. Tolliver, her fork poised, said, "I don't quite understand, Lily. I must say it's puzzling. But I guessed you knew what you were doing. It wasn't as if you were a common woman who took lovers." She must have seen the faint tinge of color that swept over Lily's face, but she continued in the manner of a virtuous woman doing her duty, seeing a thing in the proper light, being fair and honest. "I guessed there was some reason. Of course, I wouldn't want a daughter of mine to do such a thing. I would rather see her in her grave."

Her manner was emphatic and profound. It was clear that however she might forgive Lily in the eyes of the world, she had her own opinions which none should ever know but herself and Lily.

Lily blushed, the color spreading over her lovely face to the soft fringe of her hair. "You needn't worry, Cousin Hattie," she said. "Ellen would never do such a thing. You see, Ellen is complete. She doesn't need anything but herself. She's not like me at all. She isn't weak. She would never do anything because she lost her head."

Ellen's mother, who had stopped eating, regarded her with a look of astonishment. "But your mother said you hadn't lost your head. She said it was you who wouldn't marry the Governor."

Lily's smile persisted. She leaned over to touch her cousin's hand, gently as though pleading with her to be tolerant.

"It's true," she said. "Some of what mother told you. It's true about my refusing to marry him. You see the trouble is that I'm not afraid when I should be. I'm not afraid of the things I should be afraid of. When there is danger, I can't run away. If I could run away I'd be saved, but I can't. Something makes me see it through. It's something that betrays me . . . something that is stronger than myself. That's what happened with the Governor. It was I who was more guilty than he. It is I who played with fire. If I was not unwilling, what could you expect of him . . . a man. Men love the strength of women as a refuge from their own weakness." She paused and her face grew serious. "When it was done, I was afraid . . . not afraid, you understand of bearing a child or even afraid of what people would say of me. I was afraid of losing myself, because I knew I couldn't always love him. . . . I knew it. I knew it. I knew that something had betrayed me. I couldn't give up all my life to a man because I'd given an hour of it to him. I was afraid of what he would become. Can you understand that? That was the only thing I was afraid of . . . nothing else but that. It was I who was wrong in the very beginning."

But Mrs. Tolliver's expression of bewilderment failed to dissolve before this disjointed explanation. "No," she said, "I don't understand. . . . I should think you would have wanted a home and children and a successful husband. He's been elected senator, you know, and they talk of making him president."

Lily's red lip curved in a furtive, secret, smile. "And what's that to me?" she asked. "They can make him what they like. A successful husband isn't always the best. I could see what they would make him. That's why I couldn't face being his wife. I wasn't a girl when it happened. I was twenty-four and I knew a great many things. I wasn't a poor innocent seduced creature. But it wasn't so much that I thought it out. I couldn't help myself. I couldn't marry him. Something inside me wouldn't let me. A part of me was wise. You see, only **half** of me loved him . . . my body, shall we say, desired

him. That is not enough for a lifetime. The body changes." For a second she cast down her eyes as if in shame and Mrs. Tolliver, who never before had heard such talk, looked away, out of the tall window across the snow covered park.

"Besides," Lily continued, after a little silence, "I have a home and I have a child. Both of them are perfect. I am a very happy woman, Cousin Hattie . . . much happier than if I had married him. I know that from what he taught me . . . in that one hour."

Mrs. Tolliver regarded her now with a curious, prying, look. Plainly it was a miracle she had found in a woman who had sinned and still was happy. "But you have no husband," she said presently, with the air of presenting a final argument.

"No," replied Lily, "I have no husband."

"But that must mean something."

"Yes, I suppose it does mean something."

And then the approach of the mulatto woman put an end to the talk for the time being. When she had disappeared once more, it was Mrs. Tolliver who spoke. "You know," she said, "I sometimes think Irene would be better off if such a thing had happened to her. It isn't natural, the way she carries on. It's morbid. I've told her so often enough."

"But it couldn't have happened to Irene. She will never marry. You see Irene's afraid of men . . . in that way. Such a thing I'm sure would drive her mad." And Lily bowed her lovely head for a moment. "We must be good to Irene. She can't help being as she is. You see she believes all love is a kind of sin. Love, I mean, of the sort you and I have known."

At this speech Mrs. Tolliver grew suddenly tense. Her large, honest face became scarlet with indignation. "But it isn't the same," she protested. "What I knew and what you knew. They're very different things. My love was consecrated."

Lily's dark eyes grew thoughtful. "It would have been the same if I had married the Governor. People would have said that we loved each other as you and Cousin Charles love each

other. They wouldn't have known the truth. One doesn't wash one's dirty linen in public."

Her cousin interrupted her abruptly. "It is not the same. I could not have had children by Charlie until I was married to him. I mean there could have been nothing like that between us beforehand."

"That's only because you were stronger than me," said Lily. "You see I was born as I am. That much I could not help. There are times when I cannot save myself. You are more fortunate. Irene is like me. That is the reason she behaves as she does. After all, it is the same thing in us both."

But Mrs. Tolliver, it was plain to be seen, understood none of this. It was quite beyond her simple code of conduct. Her life bore witness to her faith in the creed that breaking the rules meant disaster.

"I know," continued Lily, "that I was lucky to have been rich. If I had been poor it would have been another matter. I should have married him. But because I was rich, I was free. I was independent to do as I wished, independent . . . like a man, you understand. Free to do as I pleased." All at once she leaned forward impulsively. "Tell me, Cousin Hattie . . . it has not made me hard, has it? It has not made me old and evil? It has not made people dislike me?"

Mrs. Tolliver regarded her for a moment as if weighing arguments, seeking reasons, why Lily seemed content and happy despite everything. At length, finding no better retort, she said weakly, "How could they dislike you? No one ever knew anything about it."

A look of triumph shone in Lily's dark eyes. "Ah, that's it!" she cried. "That's it! They didn't know anything, so they don't dislike me. If they had known they would have found all sorts of disagreeable things in me. They would have said, 'We cannot speak to Lily Shane. She is an immoral woman.' They would have made me into a hard and unhappy creature. They would have created the traits which they believed I should possess. It is the knowing that counts and not the act itself. It is the old story. It is worse to be found out in a little sin than to commit secretly a big one. There is

only one thing that puzzles them." She raised her slim, soft hands in a little gesture of badinage. "Do you know what it is? They can't understand why I have never married and why I am not old and rattly as a spinster should be. It puzzles them that I am young and fresh."

For a time Mrs. Tolliver considered the dark implications of this speech. But she was not to be downed. "Just the same, I don't approve, Lily," she said. "I don't want you to think for a minute that I approve. If my daughter had done it, it would have killed me. It's not right. One day you will pay for it, in this world or the next."

At this threat Lily grew serious once more and the smoldering light of rebellion came into her eyes. She was leaning back in her old indolent manner. It was true that there was about her something inexpressibly voluptuous and beautiful which alarmed her cousin. It was a dangerous, flaunting beauty, undoubtedly wicked to the Presbyterian eyes of Mrs. Tolliver. And she was young too. At that moment she might have been taken for a woman in her early twenties.

After a time she raised her head. "But I am happy," she said, defiantly, "completely happy."

"I wish," said Mrs. Tolliver with a frown, "that you wouldn't say such things. I can't bear to hear you."

And presently the talk turned once more to Irene. "She is interested in this young fellow called Krylenko," said Mrs. Tolliver. "And your mother is willing to have her marry him, though I can't see why. I would rather see her die an old maid than be married to a foreigner."

"He is clever, isn't he?" asked Lily.

"I don't know about that. He made all this trouble about the strike. Everything would be peaceful still if he hadn't stirred up trouble. Maybe that's being clever. I don't know."

"But he must be clever if he could do all that. He must be able to lead the workers. I'm glad he did it, myself. The Harrison crowd has ruled the roost long enough. It'll do them good to have a jolt . . . especially when it touches their pocketbooks. I saw him once, myself. He looks like a power-

ful fellow. I should say that some day you will hear great things of him."

Mrs. Tolliver sniffed scornfully. "Perhaps . . . perhaps. If he is, it will be because Irene made him great. All the same I can't see her marrying him . . . a common immigrant . . . a Russian!"

"You needn't worry. She won't. She could never marry him. To her he isn't a man at all. He's a sort of idea . . . a plaster saint!" And for the first time in all her discussion of Irene a shade of hard scorn colored her voice.

XLIV

FOR an hour longer they sat talking over the coffee while Lily smoked indolently cigarette after cigarette beneath the disapproving eye of her cousin. They discussed the affairs of the household, the news in the papers of Mrs. Julis Harrison's second stroke, of Ellen, and Jean from whom Lily had a letter only that morning.

"Has the Governor ever asked for him?" inquired Mrs. Tolliver, with the passionate look of a woman interested in details.

"No," said Lily, "I have not heard from him in years. He has never seen the boy. You see Jean is mine alone because even if the Governor wanted him he dares not risk a scandal. He is as much my own as if I had created him alone out of my own body. He belongs to me and to me alone, do you see? I can make him into what I will. I shall make him into a man who will know everything and be everything. He shall be stronger than I and cleverer. He is handsome enough. He is everything to me. A queen would be proud to have him for her son."

As she spoke a light kindled in her eyes and a look of exultation spread over her face. It was an expression of passionate triumph.

"You see," she added, "it is a wonderful thing to have some one who belongs to you alone, who loves you alone and no one else. He owns me and I own him. There is no one else who counts. If we were left alone on a desert island, we would be content." The look faded slowly and gave place to a mocking smile that arched the corners of her red lips. "If I had married the Governor, the boy might have become anything. . . . I should have seen him becoming crude and common under my very eyes. I should have hated his father and I could have done nothing. As it is, his father is only a

memory . . . pleasant enough, a handsome man who loved me, but never owned me . . . even for an instant . . . not even the instant of my child's conception!"

During this speech the manner of Mrs. Tolliver became more and more agitated. With each bold word a new wave of color swept her large face, until at the climax of Lily's confession she was struck mute, rendered incapable of either thought or action. It was a long time before she recovered even a faint degree of her usual composure. At last she managed to articulate, "I don't see, Lily, how you can say such things. I really don't. The words would burn my throat!"

Her cousin's smile was defiant, almost brazen. "You see, Cousin Hattie, I have lived among the French. With them such things are no more than food and drink . . . except perhaps that they prefer love to everything else," she added, with a mischievous twinkle in her dark eyes.

"And besides," continued Mrs. Tolliver, "I don't know what you mean. I'm sure Charles has never *owned* me."

"No, my dear," said Lily, "He never has. On the contrary it is you who have always owned him. It is always one thing or the other. The trouble is that at first women like to be owned." She raised her hand. "Oh, I know. The Governor would have owned me sooner or later. There are some men who are like that. You know them at once. I know how my father owned my mother and you know as well as I that she was never a weak, clinging woman. If she had been as rich as I, she would have left him . . . long ago. She could not because he owned her."

"But that was different," parried Mrs. Tolliver. "He was a foreigner."

They were treading now upon that which in the family had been forbidden ground. No one discussed John Shane with his wife or children because they had kept alive for more than thirty years a lie, a pretense. John Shane had been accepted silently and unquestioningly as all that a husband should be. Now the manner of Mrs. Tolliver brightened visibly at the approach of an opening for which she had waited more years than she was able to count.

"But he was a man and she was a woman," persisted Lily. "I know that most American women own their husbands, but the strange thing is that I could never have married a man whom I could own. You see that is the trouble with marriage. It is difficult to be rid of a husband."

Mrs. Tolliver shifted nervously and put down her coffee cup. "Really, Lily," she said, "I don't understand you. You talk as though being married was wrong." Her manner, for the first time, had become completely cold and disapproving. She behaved as though at any moment she might rise and turn her back forever upon Lily.

"Oh, don't think, Cousin Hattie, that people get married because they like being tied together by law. Most people get married because it is the only way they can live together and still be respected by the community. Most people would like to change now and then. It's true. They're like that in their deepest hearts . . . far down where no one ever sees."

She said this so passionately that Mrs. Tolliver was swept into silence. Books the good woman never read because there was no time; and even now with her children gone, she did not read because it was too late in life to develop a love for books. Immersed always in respectability, such thoughts as these had never occurred to her; and certainly no one had ever talked thus in her presence.

"I don't understand," she was able to articulate weakly after a long pause. "I don't understand." And then as if she saw opportunity escaping from her into spaces from which it might never be recovered, she said, "Tell me, Lily. Have you ever had any idea from where your father came?"

The faint glint of amusement vanished from her cousin's eyes and her face grew thoughtful. "No. Nothing save that his mother was Spanish and his father Irish. He was born in Marseilles."

"And where's that?" asked Mrs. Tolliver, aglow with interest.

"It's in the south of France. It's a great city and an evil one . . . one of the worst in the world. Mamma says we'll never know the truth. I think perhaps she is right."

After this the conversation returned to the minutiae of the

household for a time and, at length, as the bronze clock struck three the two women rose and left the room to make their way upstairs to the chamber of the dying old woman. In the hall, Lily turned, "I've never talked like this to any one," she said. "I'd never really thought it all out before. I've told you more than I've ever told any one, Cousin Hattie . . . even my mother."

Upstairs Mrs. Tolliver opened the door of the darkened room, Lily followed her on tiptoe. In the gray winter light, old Julia Shane lay back among the pillows sleeping peacefully.

"Will you wake her for her medicine?" whispered Lily.

"Of course," replied her cousin, moving to the bedside, where she shook the old woman gently and softly called her name.

"Aunt Julia! Aunt Julia!" she called again and again. But there was no answer as Mrs. Tolliver's powerful figure bent over the bed. She felt for the weakened pulse and then passed her vigorous hand over the face, so white now and so transparent. Then she stood back and regarded the bony, relentless old countenance and Lily drew nearer until her warm full breasts brushed her cousin's shoulder. The hands of the two women clasped silently in a sort of fearful awe.

"She has gone away," said Mrs. Tolliver, "in her sleep. It could not have been better."

And together the two women set about preparing Julia Shane for the grave, forgetful of all the passionate talk of an hour before. In the face of death, it counted for nothing.

XLV

A LITTLE while later, Lily herself went down the snow covered drive and summoned a passing boy whom she sent into the Flats in search of Irene, since she herself dared not venture among the sullen strikers. After two hours, he returned to say he could find no trace of the sister. So it was not until Irene returned at midnight that she learned her mother was dead. She received the news coldly enough, perhaps because in those days death and suffering meant so little to her; but even Lily must have seen the faint glimmer of triumph that entered her sister's pale, red-rimmed eyes at the news that she was free at last.

Just before dawn when the searchlights, swinging their gigantic arcs over the Flats, pierced the quiet solitude of Lily's room and wakened her, she heard through the mist of sleep the voice of Irene praying in her room for mercy upon the soul of their mother. For a second, she raised her head in an attitude of listening and then sank back and quickly fell asleep, her rosy face pillowed on her white bare arm, her bright hair all loose and shining in the sudden flashes of reflected light.

The Town newspapers published long obituaries of Julia Shane, whole columns which gave the history of her family, the history of John Shane, so far as it was known, and the history of Cypress Hill. In death it seemed that Julia Shane reflected credit in some way upon the Town. She gave it a kind of distinction just as the Cyclops Mills or any other remarkable institution gave it distinction. The newspapers treated her as if she were good advertising copy. The obituaries included lists of celebrated people who had been guests at Cypress Hill. Presidents were mentioned, an ambassador, and the Governor who was now a senator. They remarked that Julia Shane was the granddaughter of the man who gave the Town its name. For a single day Cypress Hill regained its lost and splendid

prestige. Newcomers in the Town, superintendents and clerks from the idle Mills, learned for the first time the history of Shane's Castle, all but the scandalous stories about John Shane which were omitted as unsuitable material for an obituary. Besides no one really knew whether they were true or not.

And despite all this vulgar fanfare, it was clear that a great lady had passed, one who in her day had been a sovereign, but one whose day had passed with the coming of the Mills and the vulgar, noisy aristocracy of progress and prosperity.

The obituaries ended with the sentence, "Mrs. Shane is survived by two unmarried daughters, Irene, who resides at Cypress Hill, and Lily who for some ten years has made her home in Paris. Both were with their mother at the time of her passing."

It was this last sentence which interested the older residents. *Lily, who for some ten years has made her home in Paris. Both were with their mother at the time of her passing.* How much lay hidden and mysterious in those two lines. Until the publishing of the obituary, the Town had known nothing of Lily's return.

At five o'clock on the afternoon of the funeral Willie Harrison sat in his mother's bedroom in the sandstone house giving her a detailed account of the funeral. Outside the snow fell in drifting clouds, driven before a wind which howled wildly among the ornamental cupolas and projections of the ugly house. Inside the air hung warm and stifling, touched by the pallid odor of the sickroom. It was a large square room constructed with a great effect of solidity, and furnished with heavy, expensive furniture upholstered in dark red plush. The walls were tan and the woodwork of birch stained a deep mahogany color. Above the ornate mantelpiece hung an engraved portrait of the founder of the Mills and of the Harrison fortune . . . Julius Harrison, coarse, powerful, beetle-browed, his heavy countenance half-buried beneath a thick chin beard. The engraving was surrounded by a wide frame of bright German gilt; it looked down upon the room with the gaze of one who has wrought a great success out of nothing by the sweat of his brow and labor of bulging muscles, as once he had hammered crude metal into links and links into chains in the

blacksmith shop which stood upon the spot now occupied by the oldest of the furnaces. It was a massive awkward room, as much like a warehouse as like a boudoir or a bedroom. It suited admirably the face in the portrait and the heavy body of the old woman who lay in the mahogany bed, helpless and ill-tempered beneath a second stroke of paralysis.

The son sat awkwardly on the edge of the red plush sofa near the mother. As he grew older, his manner became more and more uneasy in the presence of the old woman. His hair had grown thinner and on the temples there were new streaks of gray. There was something withered about him, something incomplete and unfinished like an apple that has begun to shrink before it has reached maturity. In the massive room, beneath the gaze of the overwhelming portrait, beside the elephantine bed in which he was conceived and born of the heavy old woman, Willie Harrison was a curiosity, a mouse born of a mountain in labor. He was the son of parents who were both quite masculine.

In a strange fit of forgetfulness he had worn his heavy overshoes into the sacred precincts of his mother's bedroom and they now lay beside him on the floor where he had placed them timidly when his mother commanded him to remove them lest his feet become overheated and tender, thus rendering him liable to sudden colds. Indeed, since the very beginning of the strike Willie had not been well. The struggle appeared to weigh him down. Day by day he grew paler and more nervous. He rarely smiled, and a host of new fine lines appeared upon his already withered countenance. Yet he had gone through the blowing snow and the bitter cold to the cemetery, partly at the command of his mother who was unable to go and partly because he had hoped to see Lily once more, if only for a moment by the side of an open grave.

And now Mrs. Julis Harrison, lying helpless upon her broad back, waited to hear the account of the funeral. She lay with her head oddly cocked on one side in order to see her son. Her speech came forth mumbled and broken by the paralysis.

"Were there many there?" she asked.

"Only a handful," replied her son in his thin voice. "Old William Baines . . . you know, the old man, the Shane's family lawyer. . . ."

"Yes," interrupted his mother. "An old foggy . . . who ought to have died ten years ago."

William Harrison must have been used to interruptions of this sort from his mother. He continued, "One or two church people and the two girls. It was frightfully cold on top of that bald hill. The coffin was covered with snow the moment it was lowered into the grave."

"Poor Julia," muttered the woman on the bed. "She lived too long. She lost interest in life." This remark she uttered with the most mournful of intonations. On the verge of the grave herself, she still maintained a lively interest in deaths and funerals.

"I'm glad you went," she added presently. "It shows there was no feeling, no matter how bad Julia treated me. It shows that I forgave her. People knew I couldn't go."

There was a long pause punctuated by the loud monotonous ticking of the brass clock. Outside the wind whistled among the cornices.

"She must have left a great deal of money," observed Mrs. Harrison. "More than a couple of millions, I shouldn't wonder. They haven't spent anything in the last ten years."

Willie Harrison lighted a cigarette. "Except Irene," he said. "She has been giving money to the strikers. Everybody knows that."

"But that's her own," said his mother. "It has nothing to do with what Julia left." She stirred restlessly. "Please, Willie, will you not smoke in here. I can't bear the smell of tobacco."

Willie extinguished the cigarette and finding no place in the whole room where he might dispose of the remains, he thrust them silently into his pocket.

"I asked her at the funeral if it was true," he said. "And she told me it was none of my business . . . that she would give everything she possessed if she saw fit."

Mrs. Harrison grunted. "It's that Krylenko," she observed.

"That's who it is. Don't tell me she'd give away her money for love of the strikers. No Shane ever gave his fortune to the poor."

The clock again ticked violently and without interruption for a long time.

"And Lily," said Mrs. Harrison presently.

Willie began fumbling with the ruby clasp on his watch chain, slipping it backward and forward nervously.

"She's just the same," he said. "Just the same. . . . Younger if anything. It's surprising how she keeps so young. I asked her to come and see you and she wanted to know if you had asked her to. I said you had and then she smiled a little and asked, 'Is it for curiosity? You can tell her how I look. You can tell her I'm happy.' That was all. I don't suppose she'll ever come back to the Town again after this time."

This Mrs. Harrison pondered for a time. At last she said, "I guess it's just as well she wouldn't have you. There's something bad about her. She couldn't be so young and happy if she was just an old maid. I guess after all you're better off. They have bad blood in 'em. It comes from old John Shane."

Willie winced at the bluntness of his mother's speech and attempted to lead her into other paths. "There was no trouble in the Flats to-day. None of the strikers came into Halsted street. Everything was quiet all day. The superintendent says it was on account of the old woman's funeral."

"You see," said Mrs. Harrison. "It's that Krylenko. I can't understand it . . . how a frumpish old maid like Irene can twist him around her finger."

Willie stopped fumbling with his chain. "She's made a weapon of him to fight us."

Mrs. Harrison shook her massive head with a negative gesture.

"Oh, no," she said, speaking slowly and painfully. "It may look like that, but she never thought it out. She isn't smart enough. Neither of them is, Irene or Lily. I've known them since they were little girls. They both do what they can't help doing. Julia might have done such a thing but I'm certain it never occurred to her. Besides," she added after a little pause, "she's dead and buried now."

"She came to hate us before she died," persisted Willie.

"Yes . . . that's true enough. I guess she did hate us . . . ever since that affair over the taxes."

Willie clung to his idea. "But don't you see. It's all worked out just the same, just as if they had planned it on purpose. It's the second time they have cost the Mills thousands of dollars."

This, somehow, Mrs. Harrison found herself unable to deny.

"Tell me," she said presently. "How did they appear to take it? . . . Lily and Irene?"

Willie was once more fumbling with the ruby clasp. "I don't know. Irene wasn't even dressed in mourning. She had on the same old gray suit and black hat. She looked like a crow. As for Lily, she was able to smile when she spoke to me. But you can't tell how she feels about anything. She always smiles."

After this little speech Willie rose and began to move about the room, fingering nervously the sparsely placed ornaments—a picture of himself as an anemic child with long, yellow curls, a heavy brass inkwell, a small copy in marble of the tomb of Scipio Africanus, the single memento of a voyage to Rome. He drifted over toward the window and drew aside the curtain to look out into the storm.

XLVI

ALL this time his mother, her vast bulk immovable beneath the mountainous sheets, followed him with her eyes. She must have recognized the symptoms, for presently she broke the way.

"Have you anything you want to say?" she asked.

Willie moved back to the bed and for a time stood in silence fingering the carving of the footboard. He cleared his throat as if to speak but only fell silent again. When at last he was able to say what was in his mind, he did so without looking up. He behaved as though the carving held for him the most profound interest.

"Yes," he said gently, "I want to say that I'm going to get out of the Mills. I hate them. I've always hated them. I'm no good at it!" To forestall her interruptions he rushed on with his speech. The sight of his mother lying helpless appeared to endow him with a sudden desperate courage. She was unable to stop him. He even raised his head and faced her squarely. "I don't like this strike. I don't like the fighting. I want to be an ordinary, simple man who could walk through Halsted street in safety. I want to be left alone."

Mrs. Harrison did not raise her head, but all the violent emotion, pent up and stifled by her helplessness, rose and flashed in her eyes. The scorn was thunderous but somehow it failed to overwhelm the faded, middle-aged man at the foot of the gigantic bed.

"I thank God your father cannot hear those words! He would strike you down!"

Still Willie did not flinch. "My father is dead," he observed quietly. But his smile carried implications and a malice of its own. "My father is dead," said the smile. "And my mother is helpless. Before long I shall be free . . . for the first time in my life . . . free . . . to do as I please . . . the slave of no one."

The smile wavered and clung to his face. Of course he said none of this. What he said was, "It is a dirty business. And I want nothing to do with it . . . not even any stock. If it hadn't been for the Mills, Lily might have married me."

From the bed arose the scornful sound of a hoarse chuckle, "Oh no, she wouldn't. You don't know her! She wouldn't marry you because you were such a poor thing."

At this Willie began to tremble. His face became as white as the spotless coverlet, and he grasped the bed rail with such intensity that his thin knuckles showed blue against his skin. It was the old taunt of a mother toward a child whose gentleness and indecision were to her both incomprehensible and worthy only of contempt, a child who had never suited her gigantic ideas of power and wealth.

"And pray tell me what you *do* intend to do," she asked with rich sarcasm.

A tremulous quality entered Willie's voice as he replied. "I want to have a farm where I can raise chickens and ducks and rabbits."

"Great God!" replied his mother in her deep voice. It was all she said. Moving her head with a terrible effort, she turned her face to the wall away from her son. But Willie, though he still trembled a little in the presence of the old woman and the glowering portrait above his head, had a look of triumph in his pale eyes. It said, "I have won! I have won! I have achieved a victory. I am free at last from the monster which I have always hated. . . . I am through with the Mills. I am through with Judge Weissman. . . . I can be bullied no more!"

Outside the wind howled and tore at the eaves and presently there came a suave knock at the door . . . the knock of the worldly, white haired butler. "Miss Abercrombie is here to see Mrs. Harrison," came a suave voice, and before Willie could answer, his mother's crony, her nose very red from the cold, had pushed her way like a wriggling ferret into the room.

At the sight of Willie, she halted for a moment winking at him in a purely involuntary fashion.

"Your mother is so much better," she said bridling. "Aren't you delighted?"

Willie's answer was an inarticulate grunt.

"I've come to hear all about the funeral," she continued in her bustling manner. "I would have gone myself except for the weather. Now sit down like a good boy and tell me all about." She too treated him as an anemic child still wearing curls.

Willie shook her hand politely. "My mother will tell you," he said. "I have told her everything."

And he slipped from the room leaving the two women, the ferret and the mountain, to put the finishing touches upon the obsequies of Julia Shane.

XLVII

IN the house at Cypress Hill the two sisters stayed on to await the settlement of the will proceedings.

The state of siege continued unrelieved, and as the winter advanced, as if Nature herself were hostile to the strikers, there came that year no January thaw at all. There was only more snow and unbroken cold so that Irene, instead of finding freedom with the death of her mother, encountered only more duties among the wretched inhabitants of Halsted street. The Harrisons and Judge Weissman evicted a score of families from houses owned by the Mills. Bag and baggage, women and children, were thrust out into the frozen street to find refuge in other squalid houses already far too crowded.

Judge Weissman also saw to it that the strikers were unable to secure a hall in which to meet. When the men attempted to congregate in the streets, they were charged and clubbed by the constabulary. When they sought to meet in vacant lots, Judge Weissman saw to it that the owners ordered them off. When there was a fire, the strikers were charged by the Town papers with having set it. When there was a riot, it was always the strikers who caused it. But there was one charge which the Town found, above all others, unforgivable. The editors accused the workmen of obstructing progress. They charged the strikers with menacing prosperity and injuring the "boom spirit." The Rotary Club and the Benevolent Order of Elks, the Chamber of Commerce, even the Episcopal church (very high and much given to incense and genuflections) espoused the cause of prosperity.

The strikers had no newspapers, no money, no voice. They might starve as slowly as they pleased. Krylenko himself was powerless.

Of what took place in the Town itself the two sisters knew nothing. During the day while Irene was absent Lily, clad

in a peignoir of black silk, wandered aimlessly about the house in search of ways to divert herself. She suffered profoundly from boredom. In the course of her ramblings she discovered one morning a great wooden box piled high with the yellow backed French novels "skimmed" and cast away by her mother. These occupied her for a time and when she grew tired of reading, she sought to pass the time by writing letters—addressed always to one of three people, Jean, Madame Gigon or Madame Gigon's cousin, the Baron. Wrapped in her mother's old-fashioned cloak of sealskin, she made her way to the foot of the drive and paid a passing boy to post them for her. She was careful always that none of them fell in the way of Irene.

She had the mulatto woman lay a fire in the drawing-room and, opening the grand piano which had fallen sadly out of tune, she spent hours in playing fragments of Chopin, Bach and a new composer called Debussy. Mingled with these were odd snatches of music hall waltzes and the bawdy, piquant ballads of the Cuirassiers. Once at the suggestion of Irene she took up knitting socks and mufflers for the families of the strikers, but the work progressed so slowly that at last she gave up in despair and, making a solitary excursion up the hill to the Town, she purchased an enormous bundle of socks and sweaters which she turned over to her sister to distribute among the suffering laborers and their families.

She slept a great deal too, until her opulent beauty showed signs of plumpness and this led her into the habit of walking each morning a dozen times around the border of the barren, deserted park. These perambulations wore a deep path in the snow, and the Mill guards, coming to expect her at a certain hour each day, took up positions inside the barrier to watch the beautiful stranger as she passed, wrapped in the antiquated seal-skin coat with leg of mutton sleeves, her eyes cast down modestly. As the month advanced, they grew bolder and stared quite openly. One or two even ventured to whistle at her, but their demonstrations aroused not the slightest response, nor did they interrupt the regular hour of her exercise. They might have been owls hooting among the branches of the dead trees.

The only visitors were Hattie Tolliver and William Baines, the "old foggy" lawyer, who paid a round half-dozen calls bear-

ing a little black bag filled with papers. With Mrs. Tolliver, he shared an attitude of supreme indifference alike toward the strikers and the guards. It appeared that he still lived in a day when there were no mills and no strikers. He was a tall withered old man with drooping white mustaches and a thick mass of vigorous white hair. He went about his business gruffly, wasting no time over details, and no emotion over sentiment. He treated both sisters in the same cold, legal manner.

The will was brief and concocted shrewdly by Julia Shane and old Mr. Baines. Nor was it complicated. The house and all the old woman's jewels were left to her daughter Lily. There was also a sizable gift for Hattie Tolliver and a strange bequest which came as a surprise to all but old Mr. Baines. It was added in a codicil, so he said, a short time before her death. It provided for a trust fund to support Welcome House and provide a visiting nurse until Mr. Baines and the two daughters deemed these things no longer necessary.

"That," observed the cynical Mr. Baines drily, as he read the will, "will be as long as the human race exists. I tried to persuade her against it but she would not listen. She always knew what she was doing and just what she wanted, right to the very end."

Thus Julia Shane placed herself for all time among the enemies of the Mills.

Otherwise the property was divided evenly with an allowance made to Irene for the value of the Cypress Hill holdings.

Then Mr. Baines delivered with considerable ceremony and advice two letters, one addressed to Lily and one to Irene, which had been left in his keeping.

The letter addressed to Lily read, "I am leaving the house to you because Irene hates it. I know that she would only dispose of it at once and give the money to the church. Likewise I am leaving my jewels to you, with the exception of two rings which I gave Hattie Tolliver years ago—the emerald set with diamonds and the single big emerald. No doubt you remember them. There is no use in leaving such things to Irene. She would only sell them and spend the money to buy candles for a saint. And that is not the purpose for which God made

jewels. He meant them to adorn beautiful women. Therefore I give them to you."

And thus the amethysts set in Spanish silver, two emerald rings, seven rings set with diamonds, a ruby necklace, a festoon of pearls, a quantity of earrings of onyx, diamonds, emeralds, and rubies and a long diamond chain passed into the possession of the elder daughter.

"In worldly possessions," the letter continued, "I have left you both wealthy. There are other possessions over which I had no control. They were left to you by your father and by me—the possessions which one cannot sell nor throw away, the possessions which are a part of you, possessions good and evil, bad and indifferent, the possessions which in the end are you yourself.

"There are some things which it is difficult to discuss, even between a mother and her daughter. I am gone now. I shall not be forced to look at you and feel shame at what you know. Yet I have always wanted to tell you, to explain to you that, after all, I was never so hard, so invincible, so hopelessly brittle as I must have seemed. You see, my dear, there are some things which one cannot control and one of these is the unconscious control over self-control—the thing which does not permit you to speak. Another is pride.

"You see there was never anything in common between your father and me, unless it was love of horses and that, after all, is not much. Before he ever saw me, he must have known more of life than I ever knew. But those things were secret and because of them, perhaps, I fell in love with him—after a fashion. I say 'after a fashion' because that is what it was. I was a country girl, the daughter of a farmer . . . nothing else, you understand. And you cannot know what that meant in the days when the Town was a village and no one in it ever went outside the state and seldom outside the county. He was fascinating . . . more fascinating than you can ever know. I married him on account of that. It was a great match. He was a wonderful lover . . . not a lover like the men of the county who make such good husbands, but a lover out of another world. But that, my dear, did not make him a good husband, and in a little while it became clear that I was little

more to him than a convenience. Even sending me to France didn't help matters.

"It was a bad affair, but in my day when one married there was no thought of anything but staying married. So what was done was done. There was no unmaking a mistake, even less chance after you and Irene were born. He came of one race and I of another. And never once in our life together did we touch in our sympathies. It was, in short, a marriage founded upon passion alone—a despicable state of affairs which is frequently worse than a *marriage de convenance*, for in that there is no desire to burn itself out. . . . You see, I understood the affair of the Governor far better than you ever imagined."

"And so there are things descended to both of you over which I have no control. I can only ask God to be merciful. Be gentle with Irene and thank God that you are made so that life cannot hurt you. She cannot help that which she is. You see I have known and understood more than any one guessed."

That was all. The ending was as abrupt as the manner of Julia Shane while she lived. Indeed to Lily, reading the letter, it must have seemed that her mother was still alive. She sat thoughtfully for a long time and at last tearing the letter slowly into bits, she tossed it into the drawing-room fire. Of its contents she said nothing to Irene.

The letter to Irene was brief. It read, "I leave you your money outright with no string to it, because the dead have no rights which the living are bound to respect. You may do with it as you like. . . . You may give it all to your beloved church, though it will be without my approval. You may do anything with it which will bring you happiness. I have prayed to God to make you happy. If you can find happiness by burying yourself, do it before you are an hour older, for life is too short to waste even an hour of happiness. But do not believe that it is such an easy thing to find."

"I have loved you, Irene, always, though I have never been able to understand you. I have suffered for you, silently and alone. I, who am dead, may tell you these things which in life I could not tell you. Only know that I cherished you always even if I did not know how to reach you. There are

some things that one cannot say. At least I—even I, your own mother—could not make you understand because I never really knew you at all. But remember always that I loved you in spite of all the wretched walls which separated even a mother from her daughter. God be with you and guide you.”

Irene, in the stillness of her bare, austere room, wept silently, the tears streaming down her battered, aging face. When she had finished reading she thrust the letter inside her dress against her thin breasts, and a little later when she descended and found the drawing-room empty she tore it into tiny bits to be consumed by the same fire which had secretly destroyed Lily's letter a little while before.

XLVIII

SHE made no mention of this letter to Lily, but before she left the house late the same afternoon she went to Lily's room, a thing which she had never done before. She found her sister lying on the bed in her darkened room.

"What is it, Irene?"

Irene standing in the doorway, hesitated for an instant.

"Nothing," she said presently. "I just stopped to see if you were all right." Again there was a little pause. "You aren't afraid . . . alone here in the evenings, are you?"

Out of the darkness came the sound of Lily's laughter.

"Afraid? Lord, no! What is there to be afraid of? I'm all right." And Irene went away, down the long drive into Halsted street which lay in thick blackness because the strikers had cut the wires of the street lights.

On the same evening Lily had dinner on a lacquer table before the fire in the drawing-room. She ate languidly, leaning back in her rosewood armchair, dividing her attention between the food and the pages of Henri Bordeaux. Save for a chair or two and the great piano, the room was still in camphor, the furniture swathed in linen coverings, the Aubusson carpet rolled up in its corner. Dawdling between the food and the book, she managed to consume an hour and a half before she finished her coffee and cigarette. Despite the aspect of the room there was something pleasant about it, a certain indefinable warmth and sense of space which the library lacked utterly.

The business of the will was virtually settled. She had announced her intention of leaving within a day or two. Two of her bags were already packed. One of them she had not troubled herself to unpack because she had not the faintest need of clothes unless she wished to dress each night for her lonely dinner as if she expected a dozen guests. And being indolent she preferred to lounge about comfortably in the black kimono

embroidered in silver with a design of wistaria. Yet in her lounging there was nothing of sloppiness. She was too much a woman of taste. She was comfortable; but she was trim and smart, from her bronze hair so well done, to the end of her neat silver-slippered toe.

When she had finished her cigarette she rose and went to the piano where she played for a long time, rather sentimentally and without her usual ecstatic dash. She played as if a yearning sadness had descended upon her. It may have been the thought of quitting the old house which had come to the end of the road. In another week its only occupants would be Sarah and Hennery. The others would have vanished. . . . Irene, Lily, even the black servants. There was no such thing as age or tradition. The Town had no time for such things. There was no longer room for Cypress Hill. It stood in the way of progress. The Town council was eager to buy and destroy it in order to raise on its site a new railway station, more vast and pretentious than any in the state.

It may have been this which made her sad.

Certainly her mood drove her to the depths, for she played such music as the *Liebesträume* and a pair of sentimental German waltzes. And gradually she played more and more softly until at length her hands slipped from the keyboard to her lap and she sat with bowed head regarding the pink tips of her polished finger-nails.

The curtains were drawn across the windows so that no sound penetrated from the outside. In the grate the fire of cannel coal crackled softly and new flames leapt up.

Presently she returned to her chair and novel, but she did not read. She remained staring into the fire in the same distracted fashion.

XLIX

SHE was sitting thus when she turned at the sound of shuffling footsteps and saw Sarah coming softly toward her. The countenance of the mulatto carried a vague, indefinable expression of fear. It was gray with terror.

"What is it, Sarah?" asked Lily. "In the name of Heaven what is the matter?"

The woman trembled. "There's trouble a-brewin', Miss Lily," she said. "The park is full of men. They've been comin' in at the gate and they're all over the place." The woman hesitated again. "Hennerly's watching now. He sent me to ask if he was to send for the police?"

Lily stood up and fastened the black and silver kimono higher about her throat.

"Who are they?"

"I don't know, Miss Lily. Hennerly thinks mebbe they're strikers. He's put out the light at the back, so he can watch 'em without bein' seen."

For a moment Lily remained silent and thoughtful. Presently she said, "Put out the lights in here, Sarah. I'll go and look myself."

And she went out, leaving the frightened servant to extinguish the lamps.

A moment later, groping her way through the dark hallway to the servants' quarters, she stumbled suddenly upon the terrified figure of Hennerly kneeling down by a window, keeping watch.

"It's Miss Lily, Hennerly," she said. "Don't be frightened."

The window was a blue rectangle against the wall of the hallway. It was a clear night but moonless, although the bright, cold sky was all powdered with glistening stars. Outside in the park, among the dead trunks of the trees, moved

scores of figures black against the blue gray snow. Some of them carried lanterns of one sort or another. There were even women among them, women with shawls over their heads, wearing short heavy skirts which cleared the top of the deep snow. Behind them, the searchlights from the mill yard fingered the blue dome of the sky nervously, sweeping now up and down, now across striking the black chimneys and furnace towers, cutting them cleanly in two as if the cold rays of light were knives.

In the hallway the nervous breathing of Hennery became noisy. It was clear that something about the scene. . . something which had to do with the silent, cold furnaces, the dead trees and the blackness of the moving figures aroused all the superstitious terror of the negro.

Outside the number of men increased. They appeared to be congregating now, in a spot near the deserted kennels. The lanterns moved among the trees like dancing lights above a swamp.

"It's all right, Hennery," said Lily presently. "It's all right. The police would only make matters worse. I suppose Miss Irene told them to meet here in the park. The police won't let them meet anywhere else. It's the last place they have."

"Mebbe," Hennery muttered, doubtfully. "Mebbe."

The figure of the mulatto woman appeared shuffling her way along the wall of the corridor.

"The best thing to do," said Lily softly, "is for you to go to bed and forget about it. Nothing will happen. Just don't interfere. Forget about it. I'll go up to my own room. . . . You might see that all the doors are locked."

And with that she left the two negroes crouching on the floor of the corridor gazing with a sort of fascination at the spectacle in the barren park.

Upstairs in her own room, she drew up the chaise longue and pulled aside the curtains from the window. The glass ran to the floor so that she was able, lying down, to watch everything that took place in the park. The room was in darkness and the French traveling clock, as if to comfort her, chimed out ten as she flung herself down, covering her long limbs with a silk comforter against the chill that crept in everywhere.

Outside the strange pageant continued to grow in size and animation. Sometimes the searchlight, swinging low in its course, flashed swiftly across the park, revealing for an instant a hundred swarthy faces and as many figures wrapped in heavy coats, bits of old blanket, rags . . . anything to shut out the bitter cold. Above each figure hung a little cloud of steaming breath, a soul hovering above a body. There were negroes among them,—the negroes doubtless, whom she had seen working in the choking fumes of the acid vats.

Yet none of the figures held any individuality. They might have been automatons. Figures in a single mob, none of them possessed a distinct personality. All this was welded into one vague mass, which carried a threat of anger and violence. The terror of Hennery was not altogether beyond conception. They kept moving about too in a restless uncertain fashion among the dead trees and deserted borders. In the niches of the dead hedge the figures of the Venus of Cydnos and the Apollo Belvedere gleamed darkly.

And as Lily watched, the light in her dark eyes brightened slowly and steadily. She became like one hypnotized. She began to breathe more quickly as if the old excitement, against which she was so powerless, had entered her blood. The soft white hand holding the back of the chaise longue trembled a little.

Slowly the moving figures gathered into a black throng at the side of the kennels. Somewhere in their midst a light began to glow, increasing slowly in volume until the tongues of red flame showed above the black heads of the mob. They had built a great fire for warmth, and near it some one had set up a barrel for the speakers to stand on. By the light of the flames she was able to see that the first speaker was a little man, rather thin and wiry like a bearded gnome, who danced about a great deal, waving his arms and legs. His manner was explosive. It was impossible to hear above the flames through the heavy glass of the window what he was saying, but clearly it produced an effect. The mob began to churn about and wave its lanterns. Sometimes the sound of shouts and cries vaguely penetrated the darkened room.

At last the little man finished and was lifted down by a score

of hands. More wood was thrown on the fire and the red flames hungrily chased a shower of sparks high up among the dead branches of the trees. A moment later a second man climbed to the top of the barrel. He was an enormous fellow, a veritable giant who towered far above the mob. At the sight of him the strikers cheered wildly. Lily, from her point of vantage, must have recognized in him something vaguely familiar . . . the merest suggestion of memory in the sudden, eloquent gestures, the easy powerful grace with which he balanced himself as he spoke, the same grace she had seen one afternoon in the great shed beneath the hill. More wood was thrown upon the fire. The flames leaped higher and in the wild light, doubt was no longer possible. It was Krylenko who harangued, feverishly and desperately, the threatening sullen mob.

L

INSIDE the warm room, Lily raised herself slowly and felt her way to the closet where she took down the old sealskin coat with the leg of mutton sleeves. With this thrown about her shoulders, she went back to the window, cautiously unfastened the clasp and stepped out upon the snow covered roof of the wrought iron piazza. The snow was deep and the silver slippered feet sank to the ankles. But of this she seemed to take no notice. As if fascinated, she leaned close against the bricks, sheltering herself from the wind, and stood listening.

Krylenko addressed the strikers in some foreign tongue which might have been Russian or Polish. He spoke in a clear strong voice that rose and fell with the sincerity of an overpowering emotion. It was impossible to know what he was saying, yet the effect was tremendous. The man was a born leader. In that moment he could have led the mob where he would.

And presently he began to speak Italian . . . rather haltingly and with an air of desperate frustration. This Lily was able to understand in part. He urged them not to yield. He plead with them to fight to the end. The victory, he said, was within. . . .

Above the crackling of the fire and the voice of the speaker the air was ripped suddenly by a solitary rifle shot. Then another and another in quick succession, until the air became alive and vibrant with the sound of guns. From the throng rose a solitary scream, followed by a groan or two and the confused, animal cries of a mob suddenly stricken by a panic. The figure on the barrel disappeared, engulfed by a swarming mass of terrified humanity. Lanterns were flung to the ground and trampled. One or two exploded in bursts of red flame. The little park was alive with running figures, women in shawls, men in rags. On the gray blue snow by the deserted

kennels lay a solitary black figure. By the arbor where the wistaria had once flourished was another which stirred faintly.

Lily, leaning against the dead vines on the house, understood what had happened. The Mill guards, from the security of the barrier, had fired upon the helpless mob. The innocent plan of Irene had been, after all, nothing but a trap.

Something struck the bricks above her head with a sharp spatter and bits of mortar fell into her hair. Quickly she slipped through the tall window back into the room and waited.

The little park was empty now, so empty that if it had not been for the embers in the snow and black still figure lying near by, one might have believed that there had been no mob at all, no fire and no savage cries of terror. Lily remained standing inside the window as if she were unable to move. The dying embers appeared to exert an overpowering fascination . . . the dying embers and the still black figure in the snow.

Presently there crept out from the shelter of the kennels a man, bending low to the ground as he moved. Cautiously he made his way to the figure in the snow, halting there for a moment to fumble with the ragged coat for some sign of life, risking his life in full sight of the guards. Another shot rang out and then another, and the man still crouching low to the ground ran toward the shelter of the big house. He came nearer and nearer until, as he crossed the drive, he was no longer a unit in the mob. He became an individual. It was Krylenko.

A second later he disappeared beneath the edge of piazza roof and Lily lay down once more on the chaise longue. She was still trembling. It may have been the cold.

Outside the night once more settled back into a dreadful stillness. The searchlights fingered the sky with a new agitation. The house itself grew still as death. The only sound was the faint, irregular, untraceable creaking which afflicts old houses in the midst of the night. The French traveling clock struck eleven and at the same time a new sound, not at all like the distant unearthly creaking, came faintly through the open door of Lily's room. It was an indistinct scraping sound as if some one were trying a key in a lock.

LILY sat up, listening. The sound was repeated and presently there followed the noise of a door being opened slowly and cautiously. Lily rose and made her way to the dressing table where she pulled the bell. Once she pulled, and then again and again. There was no response. Either the servants were asleep or too terrified to answer. She gave the bell a final pull and when the only answer was silence, she took from the dressing table an electric torch and from the drawer of her carved desk a tiny pistol with a handle of mother of pearl which had been her mother's. Then she made her way quietly into the hall until she reached the top of the stairway where she leaned over the rail and flashed the light.

The glare illuminated all the lower hall, lighting up the familiar carved chest, the straight-backed chair, the crystal chandelier, the mirror. Everything was the same save that on the chest with his head bowed and resting on his hands in an attitude of despair, sat Krylenko, hatless, his coat all torn, the blood streaming down the side of his face.

It appeared that he was weak and dazed, for he remained in this same position for a long time, failing to notice even the bright shower of light which, without warning, drenched the hall. When at last he stirred, it was to lean back wearily against the wall and say in a low voice, "I have used the key, Miss Irene."

At the sound Lily ran down the long stairs, more rapidly than she had descended them in all the years she had lived in the house. She soared above the polished wood, until she stood suddenly by his side. She bent over him and touched his shoulder.

"It is not Miss Irene . . . I am Lily," she said. "Lily . . . Miss Irene's sister."

With one arm Krylenko wiped the blood from his eyes.

"Then you don't know me," he said weakly. "I am not a thief . . . breaking in."

The little revolver Lily placed beside him on the chest. "I know you," she said. "I have seen you . . . you are Krylenko." She placed one arm beneath his. "Come," she said, "this is no place for you. There is a divan in the drawing room. Come and lie down there. I'll fetch some whiskey."

With an air of great weariness the man managed to gain his feet and, leaning upon her, he made his way preceded by the little circle of white light from Lily's torch across the polished floor into the drawing-room. Lily was tall but Krylenko towered above her like a giant.

She made him comfortable, piling the brocade pillows carelessly beneath his bloody head. Then she went out and as she left, there rose behind her the sound of a heart breaking sigh, like the cry of a defeated, sobbing child.

After a little while she returned bearing a white basin filled with water, a pair of linen pillow cases and a small silver flask. Presently he sat up.

It was the first time she had seen him since that afternoon in the Mill shed when Willie Harrison, fumbling with the ruby clasp of his watch chain, proposed to her for the last time. He had changed. He was older. Experience had traced its record in the fine lines about his eyes and mouth. The crudeness of the massive head had likewise undergone a change, giving place to a more certain modeling and a new dignity. Where there had once been a certain shapelessness of feature, there was now a firmness of line, a determination in the fine mouth, the strong nose and the high massive forehead.

Lily, tearing the linen pillow cases into long strips, watched him narrowly.

The wavy blond hair, where it was not stained with blood, clung against the damp forehead. Where the coat was torn and the dark flannel shirt ripped from the throat, the powerful muscles of the arm and shoulder lay exposed. The fair skin was as white as Lily's own soft body. The man's whole figure carried an air of freedom, of a certain fierce desire to burst through the shabby, stained clothing.

All at once he raised his head and looked about him. The color returned a little way into his face.

"The blinds," he said, "are they shut?"

"Yes," said Lily. "You are safe here."

She had thrown off the old sealskin coat and sat by him clad in the black and silver kimono, seductive, beautiful, perfect, save for the tips of her silver slippers all soaked by the melted snow. The kimono had come open at the neck and left her white soft throat exposed. Krylenko was watching her now in a puzzled fashion. He behaved almost as if she terrified him in some new and indefinable way.

"I let myself in with a key," he told her. "A key Miss Irene gave me. She told me to use it if ever I had to hide." He paused for a moment and took a second drink from the flask. "You see, I am safe here because it is the last place they would look for me. They would never look for me in the house of a rich man. They wouldn't expect to find me in the house of an American, a wealthy lady."

He looked up at her in a singularly straightforward fashion.

"I suppose," he said, "you too are on our side."

Lily dipping a bit of linen into the basin did not reply for a moment. At last she said, "I'd never thought about it one way or another until now. It doesn't matter, I suppose. But you needn't fear what I'll do. I'd rather have *you* here than the police."

"If they caught me now," he continued weakly, "they'd hang me. I wouldn't have a chance with Judge Weissman and the rest. Any jury in the Town would hang me. You see there were men killed out there in the park . . . men on both sides. That fellow over by the fire . . . he's dead. I stopped to make certain. I didn't kill anybody myself, but that makes no difference. It's me they're after. They've been waiting for a chance like this."

He spoke English with a curious lack of accent, for the chaste Irene as a teacher was thorough. He spoke it deliberately and rather carefully to be sure, but without serious faults. His manner was neither shy nor awkward. It was the manner of a man unused to women's company, of a man who had never before addressed a great lady; for Irene could not properly be

called either a woman or a great lady. She was, rather, the embodiment of an idea.

"You're safe," said Lily. "You may depend on it. I, myself, will see to it. I don't love the police or the Harrisons or Judge Weissman . . . I don't love any of them." She drew her chair nearer. "Now lie down and I'll bathe your head."

He lay down and instantly sat up again. "My head!" he protested. "It's all bloody. . . . It'll spoil everything." He picked up one of the pillows. "See, I've done it already. They're covered with blood."

Lily smiled at him in her charming fashion, an imperceptible, secret smile. She behaved as if she were entertaining a great man, an ambassador or a rich banker, as if she were intent only upon making him comfortable, at ease.

"It makes no difference," she said. "In a few days there will be no one to use the pillows. There are times, you know, when such things don't matter. Lie down," she commanded. "One must know when such things are of no account. It is part of knowing how to live."

Protesting, Krylenko laid his great body back gently and she bent over him, first removing the rings from her finger and placing them in a glittering heap upon the lacquer table. He closed his eyes with a sigh and she washed away with great gentleness the blood from his hair, from the side of his face. Her soft white fingers swept across the tanned face, then lower to where the throat became white and across the smooth, hard muscles of the shoulder until at last there was in her touch more of the caress of a woman than the ministering of a nurse.

"It is not serious," she said in a low voice. "The bullet only cut the skin."

She took the strips of linen and bound them with the same gentle, caressing fingers round and round his head. And presently she discovered that he was still watching her in a curious embarrassed fashion. When she had finished the dressing, she bathed the deep cut on his shoulder and bound it carefully.

At length he sat up once more. A sudden change came over him. His blue eyes grew dark, almost clouded.

"You are a good nurse," he said, and took another drink from the silver flask.

Lily moved about, clearing away the blood stained cloths and the bowl of reddish water. The soft glow of the lamp captured the silver of her kimono and fixed it as she moved with a flashing light. And all the time Krylenko regarded her with a strange look of awe, as if he had never before seen a woman.

"Strange," she said presently, "that we should meet like this. . . You, who have never seen me before."

Krylenko stirred and ran one strong hand awkwardly over the back of the other. "I've seen you before . . . twice . . . No . . . three times. Once on that day you came to the Mills, once in the street in your carriage and once"—he looked up—"once in this room, right here. You were with the boss that time . . . dancing with him."

Lily laughed softly. She must have remembered the shameless gown of chartreuse green. "I'll never be dancing with him again. I doubt if I ever see him."

Krylenko regarded her quizzically. "But he is rich. . . . Don't rich women marry rich men?" And he finished with a puzzled grunt of inquiry.

"Yes," replied Lily. "It's because I'm rich that I wouldn't marry him." It must have occurred to her then how wide was the chasm which separated her world from Krylenko's. Still he failed to understand.

"That's no reason," she continued, "for marrying him . . . a poor thing like that."

She sat down and drew her chair quite close to the rosewood sofa, laughing at the same time. Clearly the whole adventure struck her as bizarre, ridiculous . . . even unreal. Yet she trembled as if she were shivering with cold, and her laugh carried a vague hint of hysteria. She leaned forward and began to stroke his aching head gently.

After a long awkward pause, she said, "Miss Irene will be home any time now."

"Yes." And Krylenko gave a sort of grunt. Unmistakably there was a crudeness about him. He was gauche, awkward; yet there was in his manner a quality of power, of domination which had its origin somewhere in the dim ages, when there

were no drawing-rooms and no books of etiquette. He had a manifest self-possession. He did not become obsequious before this great lady as Judge Weissman and other men in stations beneath her had done. He treated her, after all, as his equal. He was even a little arrogant; a trifle scornful of her wealth.

"Miss Irene," he observed presently, "is a noble woman. You understand she gives up her life to my people. Do you know where she is now?" His voice was raised, his manner excited. "She's looking after the fellows that got hurt. There was a woman, too. I saw her . . . shot through the arm . . . Ah, Miss Irene is a saint. You know she could go anywhere in the Flats. No one would touch her."

The whole speech was touched with a tone of simple adoration. The essence of him was a great, a really profound simplicity.

"She works hard," said Lily. "She works hard. She cares for nothing else." By the watch on her white wrist it was midnight. "So that is why she is late," she added.

"There will be much work for her to-night," said Krylenko. He kept watching Lily in the same furtive fashion, his gaze wandering to the lovely line of her bare white throat.

Again there was an awkward pause. "You don't know how much she does," he said presently. "You don't know what life is in the Flats. You sit here in a warm house . . . with silk and pillows and good food. You don't know," he said bitterly. "You don't know!"

Until now their conversation had been broken, disjointed, awkward, as if circumstance compelled them to talk about something. Now for the first time, a certain fire entered the Russian's voice. Lily kept silent, watching him with her great burning eyes. She still trembled.

"Maybe you think I like working twelve hours a day in that hot shed like you saw me. Maybe you think I don't want time to read and think." The man was working himself into a kind of frenzy. "You don't know. . . . You don't know. . . . And then they shoot us down like pigs." He leaned forward and raised at Lily a strong finger. "I come here from Russia. I come here because I could not live in Russia. . . . My father . . . My father . . . He was shot by the Cos-

sacks. I come here because they tell me that in America you are free and have a good life. And what do they give me? They make me work twelve hours in a hot shed. They put me into a filthy house. They say, you must not complain. You must do as we say. We will not pay you more. We will not let you live like a man. You are Hunkies! . . . You are dirt! You did not have to come here. But all the same, they want us. They send men to Russia to tell us great things about America so we will come here because they need men for the Mills . . . men to feed to the furnaces like coal . . . to make a few men rich." He sighed bitterly and buried his face in his hands. "And now they shoot us like the Cossacks shot my father in Russia. . . ! I came here full of hope and peace . . . only to be shot like my father in Russia!"

In his excitement he forgot the perfect English Irene had taught him. His blue eyes flashed and his face grew pale once more.

"No. . . . They can take me. . . . They can hang me. . . . Let them! I will not go away. . . . It is not America or Russia that counts. . . . It is all humanity! . . . Christians. . . . Bah!" He spat suddenly upon the polished floor. And all at once he pitched back again among the pillows, weak and fainting. The bandage slipped from his wounded head over one eye.

Quickly Lily bent over him. She poured more whiskey between his lips and refastened the bandage. Then she settled herself to chafing his strong wrists and rubbing his forehead in the old caressing motion with a delicate, white hand that trembled beyond control. A queer light came into her dark eyes.

Presently he sighed and looked up at her. "I am sorry," he said, "to bother a fine lady like you. If it had been Miss Irene." He closed his eyes suddenly. "I have been hungry, you know. We haven't even enough food in the Flats." Then he took her hand and pressed it in a naive, grateful fashion. "I am sorry, you know . . ." he murmured gently.

She did not move. She remained there stroking his head. "I know. . . . I understand. . . . You must lie still. Be quiet," she said softly. For a long time they remained thus,

and presently Krylenko, opening his eyes looked up at her with a puzzled expression. "You are not the same as Miss Irene," he said in a low voice. "You are different . . . very different."

To this she made no reply. Gently the motion of her hand ceased. A pool of silence enveloped them. *You are not the same as Miss Irene.*

LII

THE minutes passed and then suddenly, sharply, there arose a loud uproar, the sound of angry knocking and a hand rattling the big outer door. Krylenko sat up white and still. Neither of them moved. The knocking continued, punctuated now by shouts.

"It's the police!" said Lily, and stood up. "Come with me. Bring the bowl . . . the bandages!"

Krylenko stood by helplessly. It was Lily who arranged everything with a sudden clairvoyance which seemed to have overtaken her at the instant of the knocking. She turned the brocade cushions so that the bloody side was concealed and, gathering up the bandages, she led the way through the hall into the corridor where an hour earlier Hennery and the mulatto woman had crouched in fascinated terror. At last she turned into a store room piled high with boxes. Here she led him to a great box in the corner where she halted.

"I'll hide you here," she said. "They'll never find you. It is full of books." And together, with flying hands, they emptied the box. Krylenko climbed in and assumed a crouching position. He was buried beneath the books which Lily hurled into the box in bunches of three or four, in armfuls. At last he lay completely hidden beneath a great heap of yellow backed novels. . . the novels of Paul Marguerite, Marcel Prévost, Paul Bourget, Collette Willy . . . the novels that Julia Shane had "skimmed" and cast aside, the novels which to her covenanted blood *l'amour* made so tiresome.

As Lily ran through the corridor the knocking increased in violence, punctuated by shouts of "Hello, in there!" and "Open the door," uttered in a gruff bass voice. As she ran she wrapped the kimono high about her throat, and as she passed the carved chest she picked up the tiny pearl handled pistol. Then she turned the key quickly and opened the door

standing with the pistol in one hand and the yellow backed Les Anges Gardiens in the other.

Outside on the snow covered piazza stood a half dozen men in the uniforms of the constabulary. At the apparition of the beautiful woman in the doorway they remained for an instant silent, startled.

"What is it you want?" she asked.

One of the men, a burly fellow with a brutal jaw stepped forward. "We want to search the house. We're looking for a man."

"What man?" asked Lily.

"Never mind," came the gruff answer. "You wouldn't know him. He's nothing to you. His name is Krylenko."

"There's no one in the house but me and the servants." Her voice trembled a little before the menacing group on the piazza.

"That's all right," said the man. "We're going to see for ourselves. We saw him come in here."

He began to edge his way slowly toward the open door and as he moved the pearl handled pistol raised slowly, menacingly, in an even tempo with his slow insolent advance.

"You cannot come in," said Lily in a slow, firm voice. The pistol was level now with the heart of the intruder. "I've told you there is no one here. You might, it seems to me, take the word of a lady. I've been here all the evening and I would know. . . ." She raised the yellow backed novel in a brief little gesture. "I've been reading. There is no one here but myself."

The man growled. "That's all right but we want to look for ourselves." There was a painful pause. "We're going to have a look," he added with determination.

When Lily spoke again there was a new note in her voice, a sudden timbre of determination, a hint of unreasonable, angry, feminine stubbornness which appeared to awe the intruder.

"Oh, no, you're not," she said. "It is my house. You have no right to enter it. You have no warrant. It is mine. You cannot enter it." And then, as if by an afterthought she added, "Even my sister is not here. I don't know this Krylenko. I never saw him."

The man, it seemed, was baffled. If the woman in the doorway had been the wife of a workman, a simple Italian or Slovak, he undoubtedly would have brushed her aside, shot her if necessary, trampled her under foot the way his comrades had trampled to death the old Polish woman in Halsted street at the foot of the drive. But the woman in the doorway was a lady. She was not a poor foreigner. She was more American than himself. Behind her in the shadows gleamed dully a silver mounted mirror, a chandelier of sparkling crystal. Her fine, beautiful body was clad in a garment of black and silver. On her fingers glittered rings. All these things meant wealth, and wealth meant power. The man, after all, had only the soul of a policeman, a soul at once bullying and servile. For him these symbols might spell ruin. Besides, the woman was hysterically stubborn, strangely unafraid . . . so unafraid that her courage carried a hint of suspicious origin. He did not brush her aside nor did he shoot her.

"It's no use," she said. "If you return with a warrant, all right. I can do nothing. For the present, it is my house."

The man turned away and began a low conversation with his companions. He had a sheepish air, and as he talked the door was closed suddenly and locked, shutting him out in the darkness, leaving him no choice in the matter. For a time the little group of men conversed angrily, and presently they went away in defeat down the long drive.

So Lily had placed herself on the side of the strikers . . . against the Town, against the Mills. She stood now with all her family, with Irene, with the dead Julia Shane, with Hattie Tolliver and her savage umbrella.

LIII

INSIDE the house, she listened until the creak of boots on the snow died away. Then she moved off along the hall toward the corridor. She walked uncertainly and from time to time leaned against the wall for support. The spot of light from the electric torch preceded her slippèd feet, a bright moving circle which seemed to devour and destroy the streak of flooring which it crossed on its way to the storeroom. Weakly she opened the door and stepped inside.

"It's all right, now. I've sent them away."

The books in the great box stirred with a heaving motion and out of them presently emerged Krylenko, pale and shaken. He climbed out and as his foot struck the floor, Lily gave a little cry and pitched forward so that he caught her suddenly. The electric torch dropped to the floor. The glass shattered with a faint pop and the room swam in a thick, soft darkness.

She did not faint. In a moment she recovered herself and managed to stand upright, but she did not move away from Krylenko. She stood there, waiting. Slowly his powerful arms closed about her with the vague gesture of a man waking slowly from a profound sleep.

"It's all right," she whispered faintly. "I've saved you."

He made no other answer than a faint crooning sound. He stroked her hair gently with his strong, calloused hand, and tried to quiet the violent trembling which once more had taken possession of her. Again the house was silent save for the distant, ghostly creaking.

Perhaps he was seized by an overwhelming sense of awe which until that moment he had never experienced . . . an awe for some unknown and terrific force against which he was helpless, like a little child. It may have been that, as Irene believed, he had never known any woman, that he had been pure as a saint. If these things had not been, it is impossible

to say what might have happened. He stood holding Lily close to him, kissing with a strange, awed gentleness the white line of her bare throat.

He discovered presently that she was sobbing. . . . Lily, who never wept. It was a terrible heartbreaking sound as if, all at once, she had sensed the tragedy of a whole lifetime, as if she stood in a vast and barren plain surrounded only by loneliness.

Krylenko's hands and arms became unaccountably gentle. His cheek brushed against her white forehead with a comforting, caressing motion. And presently he lifted her as easily and as gently as he had lifted the wounded striker at Mrs. Tolliver's command, and bore her from the room and down the dark corridor. She lay quietly, still sobbing in the same heartbroken fashion.

Thus he carried her into the long drawing-room and placed her among the brocade cushions of the divan, her amber hair all disheveled, her eyes bright with tears. For a moment he stood by her side awkwardly, silent and incoherent, overwhelmed by some new and profound emotion. The fire of cannel coal had died down. In the grate there was nothing now but ashes. Silently he knelt beside the sofa and rested his blond head on her breasts. Neither of them spoke a word, but Lily's hand returned once more to the old gentle caressing motion across his tired eyes.

The minutes slipped away, one by one in a quick stream as if they were no more than the trickle of a clear spring water which is beyond all peril of drought, as if time itself were nothing and eternity even less.

So engulfed were they by the mood that even the sound of a key turning distantly in a clumsy lock and the echo of a light footfall in the hallway failed to disturb them. They were, it seemed oblivious to everything until suddenly there stepped through the doorway the thin figure of Irene in the worn gray suit and battered black hat. At the sight of them she halted, an apparition with a tired white face, drawn and quivering. It was not until she gave a low convulsive cry that Lily and Krylenko discovered she was watching them. Krylenko remained on his knees, only straightening his body to look at her.

Lily turned her head a little, gently, listlessly, almost with indifference.

Irene had become hideous. In her eyes was the light of fury. When she spoke her voice was cold with an insane, unearthly hatred.

"So," she said bitterly, "it has happened!" The worn hat fell from her grasp. Her fingers intertwined with a strangling gesture. "I might have known it. . . . I should have guessed. . . ." And then her voice rose to a suppressed scream. "You are no better than a street walker! You are damned forever! I have prayed. . . . I have prayed but God himself could not save you. . . . He would not want you . . . a vile creature . . . a strumpet! . . . to destroy all that I have spent my life to create." She began to sob wildly. "To destroy in a night what cost me years."

Slowly, silently, Krylenko rose to his feet. He watched Irene with a look of bewilderment, as if he found himself in a wild nightmare. Lily turned away silently and buried her face in the pillows. A Fury had descended upon them unawares.

Irene continued to cry. "I have known always. . . . I have known from the beginning. . . . I knew about the Governor. . . . I saw him go into your room. . . . Only God knows how many men you have had. . . . You are lost, damned, forever!" The terrible sound of her weeping echoed and reëchoed through the silent old house.

Lily raised her body from the cushions and sat with her silver slippers touching the floor. "What are you saying, Irene?" she asked. "You are mad. There has been nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing. You are mad!"

It was true that for the moment Irene was quite insane, yet her madness endowed her with the clairvoyance that is beyond sanity. She rushed toward Lily. She would have strangled her but Krylenko stepped between them and held her as if she had been an angry bad-tempered little child.

"Ah, don't lie to me," she cried. "I'm no fool. I can see. It is written in your eyes. Both of you. . . . I know. I know! . . . It is there! I see it!"

She struggled fiercely in the powerful grasp of Krylenko.

"Let me go. . . . You . . . You are no better than the others . . . a common beast, a swine like the others . . . a swine like all men, lying to me all these years. And on a night like this. May God damn you both in Hell forever and ever!"

She freed herself and sank to the floor at Krylenko's feet. The tirade gave way to a torrent of wild hysterical sobbing. Her pale, battered face was all distorted, her thin hair disarrayed. She collapsed suddenly into a barren shattered old woman, abandoned by life. She had lost in her battle against something which was far stronger than herself, stronger even than Lily and Krylenko. She was broken, pitiful.

Lily sat by helplessly, her own tears dried now. She turned the rings round and round on her fingers and in the gesture there was a concentrated agony.

"You must not mind her," she said presently. "She is not well." Then she rose slowly and moved toward her sister. "Irene," she said softly. "Irene."

But Irene shuddered and drew away from her. "Don't touch me . . . evil one! Don't touch me!" she cried monotonously.

"Perhaps if she had rest," said Krylenko. "Perhaps if she slept."

Irene kept up moaning and rocking. "In the Flats they're dying. . . . In the Flats they're dying . . . and you two up here, like beasts all that time . . . like beasts!"

Lily began to walk up and down the long shadowy room in a wild distracted manner, as if the contagion of her sister's hysteria had touched her too. "There is nothing I can do," she kept saying. "There is nothing. . . . Perhaps if we left her . . ."

It was Krylenko who solved the difficulty. He bent over Irene and picked her up despite her protests. She screamed. She wept. She would have scratched and bitten him if his arms had been less powerful and his grip less certain. He turned to Lily. "Where is her bed?"

He spoke with a curious, intimate understanding. In an hour he had come nearer to Lily than ten years had brought him to the chaste fanatic sister.

Silently Lily led the way up the long stairs while he followed

bearing Irene who moaned like a wounded animal. At the door of the room with the white bed and the pink-gilt image of the Virgin, he halted as if fearful of desecrating its purity. But Lily led the way boldly and together they laid the sister upon the narrow white bed. When they had gone out, closing the door behind them, the sound of her faint moaning haunted the dark hallway.

At the door of her own room Lily halted. "Wait," she said, and left him, returning in a moment, her arms burdened with blankets.

"Take these," she said. "It will be cold in the drawing-room." In all the confusion, she had not forgotten his wounds, his comfort.

Krylenko smiled vaguely. "It will be hard to sleep anywhere to-night," he said softly.

"But it is spoiled now . . ." replied Lily. "Everything."

And Krylenko turned away and went silently down the stairs.

It is true that no one slept until the dawn. Irene and Lily did not sleep at all. The one lay awake sobbing and praying, the other lay with her head buried in the pillows keeping her body rigid to still its wild trembling. Krylenko was the only one who slept. With the coming of dawn he sank into a deadening thick slumber among the stained brocade pillows of the rosewood sofa.

There he slept undisturbed until midday, for with the curtains tightly drawn there was no light to waken him. When at last he did waken, he found on the lacquer table beside him a note, which read;

"There are some things in this world which are impossible, things fate herself will not permit. This you will understand, I am sure. I have gone away. Irene has gone too. Where she has gone I do not know. Perhaps it does not matter. There is small chance of our ever meeting again. Our paths lie too far apart. . . . I have arranged for you to remain in the house . . . as long as it is necessary. As long even as you desire it. There is no one but yourself and the two black servants. They have been told. It is my house. It would please me to think of you there. It would please me . . . and my mother too . . . to know that you were safe inside it still lead-

ing the strike. It is a good place, for you can keep in hiding and still lead the fight. My blessings are with you and your cause."

The note was signed with Lily's name, and underneath it in the same sprawling hand was written, "O God! I love you. Good-by."

She had come in some time between the dawn and the broad daylight to leave the note by his side. She had passed him and gone away without a word, whither he could not possibly know. Nothing remained save a confused memory of her and this short, enigmatic, note which avowed nothing and yet everything.

For a long time Krylenko held the bit of paper between his strong heavy fingers, staring dully all the while at the generous impetuous writing. At last he took out a battered cigarette, put a match to it, and at the same moment set fire to the wisp of paper which he tossed among the cold ashes of the dead fire. . . . *There are some things in this world which are impossible.*

He got up and began pacing the floor angrily, up and down, up and down, scarring the polished floor at each step. It made no difference now. There was no one there any longer to use the floor. Presently he began muttering to himself. "They are no different than the others. They are all alike. When they are tired they run away because they are rich. Damn them and their money!"

And then all at once he went down upon his knees before the sofa and seizing one of the stained cushions in his arms, he kissed it again and again as if it were Lily instead of a feather-stuffed bit of brocade which he held in his arms.

HE did not quit the old house. He remained there in hiding to direct the strike. He was still there when Hennery packed the glowing Venice of Mr. Turner and the handsome malignant portrait of John Shane to be shipped to Lily in Paris. From the old house he sent out to the strikers message after message of encouragement and exhortation, until, at last, the strike was lost and there was no longer either need or place for him in the Mills or in the Town. No one knew when he went away or whither it was he went.

And the greatest of all the stories of Shane's Castle remained a secret. The Town knew nothing of the greatest sacrifice ever made within its walls.

LV

THE drawing-room of the house in the Rue Raynouard was a long, high-ceilinged room with tall windows opening upon a terrace and a sloping lawn which ran down to the high wall that shut out the dust and the noise of the Rue de Passy. It was curiously like the muffled, shuttered drawing-room in the old house in Cypress Hill, not because the furnishings were the same; they were not. From Shane's Castle Lily brought only two things . . . the glowing Venice and the portrait of her father. Mr. Turner's flamboyant painting hung above the black marble mantelpiece in the Rue Raynouard. The portrait of John Shane hung against the satinwood paneling opposite the row of tall windows. The similarity was not an easy thing to define, for its roots lay in nothing more tangible than the bond between old Julia Shane and her daughter Lily, in a subtle sense of values which the one had passed on to the other.

The cold, impersonal hand of a decorator had nothing to do with either room. There was no striving toward a museum accuracy of period. The effect was much warmer, much more personal than that. The distinction was achieved by the collection, bit by bit, of beautiful things each chosen for some quality which warmed the heart of the purchaser . . . carpets, bits of crystal and carved jade on ebony stands, books, cushions, chairs, pictures, sconces, candelabra, brocades and old Italian damasks, footstools, and mirrors which coldly reflected the warm bodies of beautiful women. Even in a city where taste and beauty were the rule, the drawing-room in the Rue Raynouard was a marvel of these qualities. It was more beautiful than the rooms of Madame Gigon's respectable friends; for these women were French *bourgeoises* and neither wealth nor decorators could endow them with a quality that descends from Heaven only upon the few and the blessed. These women admired

Madame Shane's drawing room and envied it . . . all of them, Madame de Cyon, the Comtesse de Turba, Madame Marchand, the mysterious old Madame Blaise, who people said had been a famous beauty in her youth; Geneviève Malbour, who wrote novels as dowdy as herself and struck the literary note; even the rich Duchesse de Gand, who frequented the royalist soirées and the parties given by the *chic* Jews, and only came occasionally to Madame Gigon to placate her husband whose title was created by the first Napoleon. They attempted to imitate the seductive, quiet beauty of Numero Dix but they failed somehow, perhaps because they could not resist introducing a pillow of just the wrong, violent shade or a pair of rubber plants, or some monstrous piece of furniture from the period of the Second Empire.

"This American" had outdone them, quite without striving or effort. Indeed if the success of Lily's drawing-room had depended upon either of these things it would have remained forever as ugly as on the day she moved into it, to succeed a chocolate manufacturer whose growing prosperity led him to a small palace in the new German style on the Avenue de Jena. She was incapable of effort. If she had been poor, if she had been forced to work, she would have become sloven; even her beauty would have deteriorated and grown sloppy through neglect. It was money which stood between her and these disasters . . . money which permitted her to enter a shop and say, "I will have this and this and this for my drawing-room," money which permitted her to enter any *salon* of the Rue de la Paix and say, "I will have this gown, or this one, or this," money which permitted her to go to the hairdresser, Augustine, and say, "I will have my hair waved and my complexion treated." And having been born with taste, she made no errors.

Although the friends of Madame Gigon spoke of her as "the American," it is seldom that they thought of her as a foreigner. Only her indolence and her extravagance could have betrayed to a stranger the fact that she was not a true Frenchwoman. In the seven years that followed the death of her mother, Lily abandoned forever all thought of returning to America. She spoke French to perfection, indolently and gracefully, with a

fine smooth accent. Her son, for all his American parentage and British schooling, was French; or at least, not American. He had a taste for music, for pictures, even for poetry.

"Fancy that," she remarked to Ellen. "Fancy that, and think what his father has become."

And she held up a newspaper photograph of the Governor . . . now the Senator . . . clipped from one of the American newspapers which Ellen brought to Numero Dix. It portrayed him in the act of addressing the Benevolent Order of Camels in Detroit. The pose was in itself flamboyant. Everything about him flowed. His loose black cravat flowed in the breeze. His hair, worn rather long, waved behind him. His alpaca suit ballooned about his heavy figure. His stomach rested upon a flag-draped railing, and his face wore a smile that was old and familiar, the smile of one who patronized his audience. In the background there was a vague suggestion of a square, solid figure in a richly flowered costume, wearing a pince nez and a cloud of flowing veils . . . obviously the figure of the Senatoress.

Though Lily sometimes mocked the Governor, she never mentioned him as the source of Jean's restless vitality and intelligence. But it did not matter, since no one in her world and, least of all Ellen, was interested in the Governor or eager to defend him.

The women who came to her drawing-room were, first of all, "Madame Gigon's friends." Toward Lily, for all her good-nature and her submission to their world, their attitude was never more than that of acquaintances. She saw them many times a month but there remained always an insurmountable barrier. It existed perhaps because she was too indolent to make those overtures necessary to friendship, perhaps because deep down in the heart of their bourgeois respectability they detected in the American traces of the wanton. They came to the "salons" of Madame Gigon and Lily went in turn to theirs. But she never entertained in the evening save at small dinners of four and six, and she never went to balls. Her hunger for gaiety she satisfied in the midst of crowds, at the Opéra, in the music halls, at the races. And always she was accompanied by Jean or Ellen or Madame Gigon so that no one was able

to say that she was indiscreet. If she went out frequently with the Baron, he was after all the cousin and protector of the old woman who accompanied them. If the Baron came frequently to her house it was to see Madame Gigon who was flattered by his attentions and his gifts of money.

Yet it could not be said that she was more friendly with men than with women. The men admired her. Indeed men from the world of fashion, from the world of the Duchesse de Guermantes' *soirées*, sometimes mingled with the dowdy Bonapartists of Madame Gigon's salon, brought there by friends who moved in the circle closest to "the American." They were pleasantly received and sent on their way, having accomplished nothing. If they became a trifle ardent she called Madame Gigon or the Baron to her side and the incident ended without difficulty. The visits came to nothing, for Lily appeared to have no ambitions. She was bafflingly content. She might have had great success in a score of ways, for her flamboyant beauty was a sort rarely seen among French women and it attracted notice wherever she appeared. But she had no ambitions; she was both wealthy and content. People remarked her at the Opera but it was seldom that any one was able to identify her, for none knew her. Her circle was small, dowdy and infinitely respectable. She lived quietly with old Madame Gigon, now almost blind, and a charming son. It seemed that she was even content to forego a second marriage. And among those who admired her, because she was so good-natured and lovely to look upon, was the wife of the Baron, a pretty blond woman, rich and stupid, the daughter of a manufacturer from Lyons.

Madame Gigon adored her in two quite distinct fashions. The first because Lily was pleasant, kindly and generous. The second adoration, less commendable perhaps but none the less thorough, was the adoration of a woman pinched all her life by poverty for a fellow creature who secured her declining years with every possible luxury. Madame Gigon could not possibly forget that it was Lily who had set her up in a situation worthy of a woman whose father had been ruined by his loyalty to Napoleon the Little. The widow of the curator of the Cluny Museum had grown very small and dry. Her face resembled a withered pomegranate both in texture and color. Her dog Fifi

had long since been laid to rest in the dog's cemetery on a little island in the Seine where Madame Shane had kindly raised a tombstone with Fifi in marble sitting on a bronze cushion, "tout á fait comme dans la vie." Fifi had not one successor but two, both provided by Madame Shane to console "her poor old Louise." One was a black and tan, for all the world like the departed Fifi, and bore the name of Criquette. The other, a perky black Scotty brought back from England as a surprise, bore the name of Michou. They slept in Madame Gigon's room overlooking the garden and had their own corner in the Louis Seize dining room, where they ate when the rest of the household sat down at an enormous table lighted by tall candles. Like Fifi they had gone the way of gateaux and were stout and short of breath.

THESE four . . . Lily, Madame Gigon, Criquette and Michou . . . were the permanent tenants of Numero Dix. There were two others who came and went, spending now a week's holiday, now a whole month or more. They even paid visits frequently to the lodge at Germigny l'Evec in the park of the Baron, where Lily spent the spring and the autumn of every year, taking a house during the summer at Houlgate where she lived as a Frenchwoman in the very heart of the small American colony. The transients in the establishment of Madame Shane were her son Jean and her cousin Ellen Tolliver. They flitted in and out like birds of passage, less regular in their arrival and departure, though no less spirited and noisy.

The Ellen Tolliver of the pompadour and starched shirt waists had become the Lilli Barr whom crowds packed concert halls to see and hear, whom music critics found themselves bound to commend—the same Lilli Barr whose photograph seated beside a great composer appeared in the Sunday supplements of American newspapers. This of course, the public never knew. It knew only that she was a fine pianist with a sensational presence and a vitality which reached out and engulfed them through the medium of surging music. It knew nothing of her past. Indeed there were few who knew she was an American. Her name might have been Russian or Austrian, Hungarian or German. It carried with it the glamor sought by the public which will receive the most sublime artist with indifference if her name happened to be Mary Smith and her origin Evanston, Indiana. This she realized. She shrewdly explained to Lily the evolution of her name.

"Barr," she said, "is the name of my grandfather. I have a perfect right to it. Alone and unadorned it is not thrilling. Therefore I have chosen Lilli. That, my dear, is a tribute

to you, because if it had not been for you I should probably be an old maid giving music lessons at fifty cents an hour to the daughters of mill clerks." She laughed noisily. "Lilli Barr. . . . A great name, don't you think? It will suit everybody. It will suit those who believe American musicians should be encouraged and it will suit those who must have a little exotic European sauce with their fowl. Lilli Barr. . . . It might be anything at all."

"Lilli Barr" was a name which betrayed nothing of a rather materialistic elopement with a traveling salesman called Clarence Murdock. It betrayed nothing of Clarence's quiet passing out of this life from a weakened heart too greatly tried by life with a robust and ambitious wife. It had nothing to do with a father, ruined by honesty, who wore away his middle age as clerk in an industrial bank. It gave no hint of a mother who, in an effort to follow her ambitious, migratory offspring, had kept a Manhattan rooming house for five years past. Decidedly, emphatically, it was an exotic name. There were even people who believed that she was the protégée of a German Baron named Unschaff (they had his name and the history of his amours) whom she repaid in the usual way. And this story Ellen would have been the last to deny, for she knew its value. She understood that the people who paid money for concerts must have something beside music. And she understood the value of money in a fashion never imagined by Lily. The critics might call her playing sensational, bordering even upon charlatanism, she would not deny it. The public liked an artist who understood the value of a gesture, who came upon the concert stage with air of a queen, who played with gusto and the sweep of a hurricane. She understood all that. It was not that she was insincere. There were those for whom she played exquisitely and with all the distilled beauty of a sensitive artist, with the same curious passion which had engulfed her music on that last night in the drawing-room at Cypress Hill. She was a clever woman, far more intelligent than Lily, and having been nourished in the midst of poverty and failure, her one God was success, a sort of embittered success which played upon the silliness and affectation of the world.

Certainly she had kept the promise made to Lily. She fitted

no pattern, least of all the pattern of the Town. She had her own ruthless law, founded upon consideration for friends alone. She had her own thoughts and beliefs. Indeed she hated the pattern bitterly, so bitterly that she made a vow never to play in the Town no matter what the fee offered her. In appearance she resembled curiously her grandaunt, Lily's mother. About her features there was the same bold carving. Her face was too long and her eyes a shade too green. Her figure held none of the voluptuous curves that softened her cousin's beauty; on the contrary it was slim and strong. She walked with a fine free swing that carried in it a hint of masculinity. Beside Lily she was not beautiful at all; yet on the concert stage under the glow of the lights her beauty was infinitely more effective than Lily's would have been. . . . Her energy was the energy descended directly from Hattie Tolliver. It crackled through her whole being. She was not like Lily, a woman of the world; there was a quality of directness and naivete, a breeziness springing from her background and her ancestry, which all the courts of Europe might never overcome. She was, above all else, herself, incapable of affectation or pretense. And this, she also understood, was a thing of great value because one expected it of the artistic temperament. An artist made no compromises.

LVII

ONE late afternoon in April, nineteen thirteen, when the trees in the garden were all feathery and soft with the first green of the Gallic springtime, Madame Gigon sat in her chair by the door of the long drawing-room bidding her guests good-by, one by one, as they left her usual Thursday *salon*. The drawing-room, owing to the sharp slope of the ground upon which the house was built, lay below the surface of the Rue Raynouard on the garden side of the house so that the guests leaving were forced to climb a long flight of stairs that led up to the street door. The stairway, opening directly into the drawing-room, provided a long, high vista leading up to a door, itself noticeable by its very insignificance. It was one of the charming features of the house that on the street side it was but one story high with a single door and a row of high windows which betrayed no hint of the beauty and space within its walls. On the garden side, however, the house presented a beautiful façade some three stories high, constructed of Caen stone and designed in the best manner of the eighteenth century. Lenôtre himself was said to have had a hand in the planning of the terraces and the pavilion that stood at a little distance completely embowered by shrubs and covered by a canopy made of the broad green leaves of plane trees. The house, after a fashion, turned its back upon the world, concealing its beauties from the eye of the random passerby, preserving them for the few who were admitted by the humble and unpretentious door that swung open upon the cobble stones of the Rue Raynouard. To the world it showed the face of a *petite bourgeoise*. To its friends it revealed the countenance of an eighteenth century marquise. And this fact had influenced for more than a century and a half the character of its tenants. The prosperous chocolate manufacturer abandoned it for the German palace in the Avenue de Jena for the very reason that Lily Shane seized it

the moment it fell vacant. It was no sort of a house for one who desired the world to recognize his success and the character of his life, but it was an excellent house in which to live quietly, even secretly. It stood isolated in the very midst of Paris.

Madame Gigon sat in a high-backed chair, her small, withered body propped among cushions, her feet resting on a footstool. Since her eyes had grown dim she used her ears as a means of watching her guests; and these, after the fashion of such organs, had become sharper and sharper with the failure of her sight.

A fat and dowdy woman dressed all in white and wearing an extravagant white veil moved up to her.

"Good-by, Madame Gigon," she said. "You come to me on Friday. Don't forget. The Prince himself will be there."

Madame Gigon, instead of peering at the white lady, leaned back. "Ah, it's you, Héloïse. . . . Yes, I will be there on Friday. But you are leaving early."

"No," replied the white lady, who was a countess and possessed a fine collection of armor. "No. Others have gone before me. I am dining out in the Boulevard St. Germain."

Madame Gigon smiled. "With your Jewish friends?"

"Yes. It is a long way."

"They say her eldest daughter is to marry a rich American . . . millions. He is called Blumenthal."

"Oui . . . a very nice gentleman and the Good God alone knows how rich."

"Well, money is a great thing . . . the foundation of everything, Héloïse."

"Yes . . . Good-by . . . On Friday then. And fetch Madame Shane if she cares to come."

And the plump white lady made her way with effort up the long polished stairway to the unpretentious doorway.

Madame Gigon, holding Michou on her lap, began fondling the dog's ears. She leaned back and listened. Most of the guests had gone. Her sharp ears constructed the scene for her. A shrill and peevish voice in the far corner betrayed Madame de Cyon. The old woman saw her, fat, with dyed black hair and a round face well made up to conceal the ravages of time. A Russian woman, married to a French diplomat

. . . Bonapartist of course. She translated American novels into French to amuse herself and to help keep up the household in Neuilly. Yet she was rich, for her fat pig's hands were covered with rings and the sable of her cloak was the best.

A man's voice, ill-tempered and gruff, rose through the shadowy room. Captain Marchand, who did not get on with his wife. Tactless of Madame de Cyon to have led them to the bridge table to play with each other. Bridge-mad . . . was Madame de Cyon . . . bridge-mad, and she hated like the Devil to lose. To lose five francs was like losing one of her fat legs. Strange game . . . this bridge. It put every one into a bad temper. Not at all like piquet.

"Deux pique!" announced Madame de Cyon.

"Passe!" . . . "Passe!" . . . "Passe!"

From the dining-room issued the sound of two voices in dispute, the one high-pitched, old and somewhat shrill, and the other rather deep and gentle, almost conciliatory. They drifted to Madame Gigon across the murmurous spaces of the drawing-room. Madame Blaise and "Mees Ellen's" friend, Schneiderman. Madame Blaise was a Gasconne, old, shrill and vituperatory, yet somehow amusing and stimulating . . . a little cracked perhaps but still full of spirit, and mysterious in the fashion of those whose existence has its foundations in a world of fanciful, half-mad unreality. She was tall and thin, with a mass of dyed red hair (it must have gone gray ten years earlier) under an old-fashioned purple bonnet trimmed with purple plumes and perched high on her head in the fashion of the eighties. Madame Gigon knew she was by the gateaux . . . eating . . . eating . . . eating . . . as if she starved herself at home. Yet she too was rich.

"Ah, you don't know the Germans as I do!" came the high-pitched voice. "My fine young fellow! I tell you I have lived with them. I have been on business for the government. They are capable of anything. You will see . . ."

And then the voice of Schneidermann, mild and a little amused by the old lady. "Ah . . .," gently. "Perhaps . . . perhaps. But I do not think that war is any longer possible."

"Nevertheless," persisted the voice. "One fine day you will go marching away like the rest."

LVIII

SCHNEIDERMANN was Alsatian, and Jew on his father's side, rich, for his family owned steel mills at Toul and Nancy and in the very environs of Paris, as well as coal mines in the neighborhood of St. Quentin and La Bassée. Schneidermann, tall, handsome, swarthy . . . was beautiful in an austere, sensual fashion as only Jews can be beautiful. He came sometimes to play the 'cello with "Mees Ellen," choosing queer music they called "modern" that had none of the beauty and melody of Offenbach and Gounod.

The voice of "Mees Ellen" joining the pair in the dining-room. . . . "War! . . . War! . . . Nonsense! There can't be any war. I must play in Berlin and Munich next season." Her voice rang with genuine conviction, as if she really believed that war itself dared not interfere with still more amazing successes. Madame Blaise' cynical laugh answered her.

"Ah, you young people . . . you young people. What do you know of war and politics? I have been through wars, through revolutions, you understand. I know about these things. I am as old as time."

The old woman was talking in her most fantastic vein. It was her habit to talk thus as if she were wise beyond all people. She was, as Madame Gigon said, a little cracked on this side of her.

"I know . . . I know," she continued to mutter in the most sinister fashion until an unusually large madeleine put an end to her talk.

"How much did you say . . . eight francs?" It was the peevish voice of Madame de Cyon settling her bridge debts.

"Eight francs," came the gruff reply of Captain Marchand. "Eight francs, I tell you." And then the tinkling of the Russian's woman's innumerable gold bangles as she thrust her fat bejeweled hand into a small purse to wrench loose from it the

precious eight francs. "I had no luck to-day . . . no luck at all," she observed in the same irritable voice. "No cards at all. What can one do without cards? Now last week I won . . ." And she fell to recounting past victories while Captain Marchand's chair scraped the floor savagely.

And then the voice of Madame Blaise quite close at hand, bidding Madame Gigon good-by.

"On Tuesday, then, Louise. I shall expect you."

"On Tuesday," repeated Madame Gigon.

"And bring Madame Shane if she wishes to come. But not 'Mees Tolliver.' I can't bear her and her American ways." The old harridan bent lower, her reticule shaking with the aged trembling of her thin body. "That Schneidermann!" she observed scornfully. "He is a fool! The men I knew when I was young were interested in revolutions and politics . . . not music. Music! Bah!" And to show her disgust she spat on the bare floor. . . . Then she made a hissing noise and swept up the long dim stairway, her boots squeaking as she walked.

Then the confusion of farewells as the last guests departed, Madame de Cyon passing by, still in bad humor over her losses.

"On Friday, Madame Gigon," she said. "My husband will be there. He is home from the Balkans and full of news."

"Of the wars I suppose. . . . On Friday, Madame."

"And tell Madame Shane she is expected also."

Then Captain Marchand and Madame Marchand, also in a bad humor because they got on badly. Madame Marchand's day fell on Monday and she too asked the old woman to bring Madame Shane. Her invitation was made in the same oblique fashion as the other. "Bring Madame Shane if she cares to come."

At last there remained no one save those whom Lily, in her vague, lazy fashion called "the family." These were old Madame Gigon, Ellen Tolliver, Jean, herself and the Baron.

As the blond little Captain Marchand, pompously clanking his spurs as he walked, disappeared up the darkening reaches of the long stairway, Jean, who had been reading in a corner reserved for himself, sprang up with the bound of a young animal and ran across to Ellen and Schneidermann.

"Alors! Viens donc . . . la musique!" he cried, seizing her by the hand while she struggled against his youthful strength, and Schneiderman laughed at his exuberance. She resisted, bracing her strong slim body and indulging in a mock struggle.

"Not a sound from me," she replied. "Unless we talk English. I can make no more effort with this waiter's chatter."

It was a price which she exacted frequently, for she spoke French badly, though with great vigor, and with an accent so atrocious that it seemed quite beyond hope of improvement. Her English carried the drawling tang of the middle west. She called "dog" *dawg* and "water" *watter*.

Jean resembled his mother. His hair, like hers, was red though less soft and more carroty. His nose was short, straight, and conveyed an impression of good humor and high spirits. He was tall for his age and strongly built with a slim figure which gave every promise of one day growing into the bulky strength of the Governor. He possessed a restless, noisy, energy quite incomprehensible to Lily. To-day he wore the uniform of a cadet at the cavalry school at St. Cyr. It was the idea of the Baron, himself a cuirassier, that Jean should be trained for the cavalry. "If he does not like it, he may quit," he told Lily. As for Jean, he appeared to like it well enough. He was as eager for a war as Madame Blaise had been certain of one.

"Come along, Nell," he cried. "Be a good cousin, and play that four-handed stuff with me."

Madame Gigon, with Michou and Crikette waddling amiably after her, stole quietly away to her room to lock her door against the hideous sounds which Ellen, Schneidermann and Jean made when they played what they called modern "music."

From the shelter of a divan placed between two of the tall windows, Lily and the Baron watched the three noisy musicians. On the verge of middle-age, her beauty appeared to have reached its height. There are those who would have preferred her as a young girl, fresher, more gentle and more naive. But likewise there are those who find the greatest beauty in the opulent women of Titian, and it was this beauty which Lily now possessed. She wore a black tea-gown, loosely and curiously made with a collar which came high about her throat and empha-

sized the ivory green tint of her skin and the copper red of her hair. She lay back among the cushions watching Jean with the triumphant, possessive look which strayed into her dark eyes whenever her son was with her. It was an expression so intense as to be almost tragic.

The Baron smiled too, but his smile was concealed somewhat by the fierce black military mustaches that adorned his face. They were the mustaches of the French army, very long, very luxurious, and purposely rather ill-kempt. There was nothing silky about them. On the contrary they were the mustaches of an *homme de guerre*—stiff, bristling and full of vitality. He was a dark, wiry Frenchman, with strong, nervous hands and very bright black eyes which clouded easily with anger. He was perhaps four or five years older than Lily and did not look his age. Indeed his figure was youthful and muscular with the hard, fierce masculinity which belongs to some men of the Latin race.

Whenever he regarded Ellen, it was with a stern glance that was almost hostile. They did not get on well. Even Lily, indifferent and unobservant, must have seen the hidden clash of their two strong natures. It appeared that he resented Ellen's wilfulness and even the masculine simplicity of her clothes. On this evening she was at her best. Her dark hair she no longer wore in the manner of Lily. It was drawn straight back from her high forehead with an uncompromising severity and done in a knot low on the back of her strong, well-shaped neck. Jean dragged her by sheer force of strength to the piano where the two sat down noisily, the boy searching through the music while Ellen played the most amazing, delicate and agile roulades and cascades of notes on the polished ivory keyboard. Schneidermann, thrown a little into the background by the wild exuberance of the pair, drew up a chair and waited quietly until it was time for him to turn the pages.

And during these preliminaries Lily and the Baron rose and made their way silently through one of the tall windows on to the terrace and thence into the garden. Lily herself confessed that she could not abide the new music.

"I do not understand it," she told her cousin. "And I do not find it beautiful. It is beyond me, I confess. I cannot

see what you and Jean find in it. I suppose it is because I am growing old. You and Jean belong to the same generation. I am too old for new ideas." And for the first time her laugh was not all geniality and warmth. It carried a fine edge of bitterness, scarcely to be discerned but none the less unmistakable.

And now in the soft spring twilight of the garden she and the Baron walked along the neat gravel paths until they reached the wall shutting out the Rue de Passy. Here they sat for a time on a stone bench saying nothing, remaining quite still and silent. And at last as the darkness grew more heavy they rose and wandered off again, aimlessly and slowly, until in the shadow of a laburnum tree, the man seized her suddenly and kissed her, long and passionately. And after a little while when it was quite dark they entered the pavilion hidden by shrubbery where Jean lived when he was home on a holiday.

The garden lay breathless and silent. Even the rumbling noises from the street beyond the wall had died away with the coming of darkness. From the distant Seine arose the faint whistle of the St. Cloud steamer, and through the tall window drifted in wild fragments the savage, barbaric chords of Stravinsky's music.

LIX

DAY in and day out Lily's life followed its easy, happy course. Always there were diversions, always gaiety, always people. Yet there were times now—indeed they seemed to have begun upon her return from America following her mother's death—when a cloud of sadness descended upon her, times when she would withdraw suddenly to her own room as if some tiny thing, a word, a gesture, an intonation, had set fire to a train of secret memories. Frequently she kept her room for the rest of the day, seeing no one, lunching and dining alone on a gilt table placed before her chaise longue by the window.

These sudden fits of melancholy disturbed Ellen who remarked on them gravely to old Madame Gigon.

"She was never like that before. I can't see what it is that disturbs her."

Madame Gigon saw no cause for alarm. "It's true," she said. "She was never like that before. But it may be that she grows tired. You see she is growing older, my dear Mees Ellen. All of us, as we grow older, like moments of solitude and quiet. It gives one time to reflect on life. You don't understand that yet. You're too young. But some day you will understand. As you get older you begin to wonder what it's all about . . . (*pourquoi le combat*)."

"Perhaps," replied Ellen with a vigorous shrug. "I'm sure it can't be her mother. It might, of course, be Irene."

And they fell to discussing for the hundredth time the case of Irene, whom Madame Gigon had not seen since she was a little girl. They talked of her strange behavior, Madame Gigon wagging her old head, staring before her with sightless eyes.

"It is tragic . . . a life like that," she would say. "A life wasted. You know she was a pretty little girl. . . . She could have married."

They spoke of her as if she were dead. It was true that to them . . . to Ellen, to Madame Gigon, she was forever lost. Perhaps they were right, with that instinctive knowledge which underlies the consciousness of women chattering together over the strangeness of human behavior. Perhaps Irene *was* dead. . . . Perhaps she had been dead since a certain night when the last traces of her faith in humanity were throttled. It was true that she had left the world and turned her faith toward God alone, as if she were already dead and in purgatory.

"She was always queer," Ellen would say.

And then Madame Gigon, as if she were conscious of toying with thoughts of blasphemy, would say piously:

"But she is a good woman, who has given her life to good work and prayer."

But she spoke as if trying to convince herself, as if she did not quite believe what she said.

And Lily, all the while, kept her secret. Undoubtedly she was no longer in her first youth. This may have depressed her, for she was a woman to whom beauty and youth were the beginning and the end. Yet the fits of melancholy had something to do with a more definite and tangible thing. They were associated in some way with a little enameled box in which she kept a growing bundle of clippings from the American newspapers which Ellen brought into the house at Numero Dix.

In the solitude of her room, she opened the box and reread them many times, over and over again until the edges became frayed and the print blurred from much fingering. They had to do with the career of a certain labor leader, a man named Krylenko who seemed a strange person to excite the interest of a woman like Madame Shane. The clippings marked the progress of the man. Whenever there was a strike, Krylenko appeared to take a hand in it. Slowly, clipping by clipping, the battle he fought was being won. The unions penetrated now this steel town, now that one. There were battles, brutalities, deaths, fires in his trail, but the trail led steadily upward toward a goal. He was winning slowly. That he was strong there could be no doubt. He was so strong that great news-

papers printed editorials against him and his cause. They called him an "anarchist," "an alien disturber," "a peril to the great American nation" and, most frequently of all, "a menace to prosperity and the inalienable rights of property."

Lily kept the enameled box locked in a drawer of her writing desk. No one had ever seen it. No one would see it until she died. It had been there for seven years.

It was on the morning after one of these attacks of melancholy, a few days after Jean's visit, that the Town suddenly intruded once more upon the house in the Rue Raynouard.

Lily sat on the sunlit terrace of the garden before a late breakfast of chocolate and buttered rolls, opposite Ellen whose habit it was to arise early and pursue some form of violent exercise while her cousin still slept. This morning she had been riding in the Bois de Bologne. As a little girl she learned to ride under the instruction of her grandfather, old Jacob Barr, and she rode well and easily with the air and the skill of one who has grown up with horses. The languid Schneidermann accompanied her on these early morning jaunts. She owned her horse because in the long run it was more economical and, as she said, "No pennies slip through my fingers."

She wore a tight black riding habit with a white stock and a low derby hat. The riding crop lay across her strong, slim knees as she smoked and watched Lily devour too many rolls and a too large bowl of rich chocolate.

Between them on the table lay the morning's letters. In Ellen's little heap there were three or four notes from struggling music students, begging help or advice from her, one from a manager proposing an interview with regard to an American tour, a bill from Durand the publisher. Lily's pile was altogether different. It consisted almost entirely of bills, from Coty, from Worth, from Henri the florist, from Augustin the hairdresser, from Lanvin . . . from . . . on and on endlessly and at the bottom a letter from the lawyers who succeeded on the death of William Baines, "the old fogey," to the management of Lily's holdings in the Town.

The last letter she read through twice with so deep an interest that the chocolate grew cold and she was forced to send for

a hot cup and more hot rolls. When she had finished she leaned back in the wicker chair, buried beneath the silk, the lace ruffles and the pale tiny bows of her peignoir.

"D'you know, Ellen," she remarked, "I am growing too rich. I've no idea what to do with all my money."

Ellen put down her letter abruptly and knocked the ash from her cigarette.

"There are plenty of places for it." She slapped the envelope against her slim thigh. "I've had two letters this morning asking me for money . . . from two music students. Heaven knows I've got nothing to spare. All that's left over I send to Ma. What is it now? A gold mine or an oil well?"

"Neither," said Lily. "It's just the Town making me richer and richer. It's from Folsom and Jones . . . I guess they're since your time. They're lawyers and they handle Irene's and my estate. They want me to sell the rest of the property we own."

Ellen pursed her lips reflectively. "How much are they offered?"

"Something over five hundred thousand. They say they can get six in a pinch."

She whistled softly. "Take it . . . take it. Those old shacks can't be worth that."

"It isn't the shacks," said Lily. "It's the land itself they want. The shacks aren't even worth repair. Why, they were built, most of them, while father was still living. The lawyers hint that the Town is ashamed of them, that they are a disgrace to the Town."

"I suppose it has changed," remarked Ellen.

"The population has doubled," said her cousin. "There aren't enough houses for the people. Why, last summer people who came to work at the Mills had to live in tents for a time. Even the people on Park avenue let out rooms. The Chamber of Commerce asked them to. They appealed to their pride not to stop the tremendous growth. There's been a tremendous . . ."

Ellen interrupted her. "I know . . . I know. . . . Watch us grow. The biggest city in the state in ten years. Well, it's money in your pocket. You've no kick coming."

The chocolate and rolls arrived and Lily began once more to eat.

"I don't see how you can eat all that and keep your figure," observed Ellen.

"Massage," said Lily. "Massage . . . and luckily the time is coming when I can eat all I want and be as fat as I like. In another fifteen years I'll be an old woman and it won't matter what I do." The faint bitterness again drifted through the speech, evasive and imperceptible.

"What does Irene say to your selling?" inquired Ellen.

"The lawyers say she wants to sell. You know I haven't had a line from her in years. She's in France now, you know."

"In France!" said Ellen, her eyebrows rising in surprise.

"Yes, at Lisieux."

"I should think you'd go and see her."

"She wouldn't see me if I went. What good would it do?"

LX

THERE was a sudden silence while Ellen beat her riding crop against her leg. "I must say she's very queer. I never understood her. You know when I was a girl, she gave me the creeps . . . the way she had of looking at you with those pale eyes."

"I know," replied Lily. And then after a pause. "You know they want to buy Cypress Hill too. The Lord alone knows how many times they tried. They began before Mama died. Irene hasn't any share in it. It belongs outright to me."

"I suppose it's the Mills."

"No, not this time. The Town wants it now." She paused while she buttered another roll. "They want it for a new railway station . . . a union station, you know, for all three roads. It's perfect for that. And each time they increase the offer. Now they write me that they've made a last offer. If I won't sell, they'll undertake proceedings to condemn it."

During this speech the countenance of Ellen Tolliver underwent a complete metamorphosis. The devil-may-care look vanished slowly, replaced by a certain hardness, a squaring of the handsome jaw, a slight hardening of the firm lips. It may have been that while Lily talked her cousin was swept by a torrent of memories—memories of hurt pride, of poverty and indignities endured because she was helpless, memories of patronizing women and young girls who spoke of "poor Ellen Tolliver," memories of her father's defeats and disappointments, of Judge Weissman's dishonesty and corruption, of her mother's agonizing and endless struggle to keep up appearances. As sometimes occurs with individuals of strong personality, a whole life, a complete philosophy stood revealed for an instant in her intelligent face. She had run off with Clarence Murdoch "to show the Town." She had become famous and successful because, deep down in her heart, she was resolved always to

show the Town how little it counted in her life, how great was the contempt she felt for it. It was always this thought—this more than everything else—which had driven her forward. And now came this new opportunity, perhaps the best of all, to block the Town, to thwart its most cherished desire. It was a chance to prevent a new and flamboyant effort to advertise its wealth, its prosperity, its bigness.

"As if," she said aloud, "'bigness' was something to be proud of. Let them try and condemn it, Lily. I doubt if they can. Anyway I'd keep it just to spite them. It's a chance to show your power." She leaned earnestly across the table, striking it with her riding crop to emphasize her words. "You hate the place as much as I do. Why, it isn't even the same Town we grew up in. It's another place built upon filth and soot. It's not that we're fouling our own nest. Why, Lily, the Town your mother and my grandfather loved wasn't that sort of place at all. It was a pleasant place where people lived quietly and peacefully, where they had horses and dogs and were decent to each other. And now that's all buried under those damned filthy Mills, under a pile of muck and corruption with Judge Weissman and his crowd enthroned on the very top." She stood up, her blue eyes flashing. "It's changed the very people in it. It's made them noisy, common, cheap. Damn it! I hate them all!" She struck the table a violent blow with her riding crop. "Don't sell it. You don't need the money. It's nothing to you . . . not even if they offered you a million!" And then she laughed savagely. "That's the best part of it. The longer you hold it, the more they'll have to pay you. The more prosperous they are, the more it will cost them to have a new railway station. You're the one who has the power now. Don't you see what power there is in money? . . . the power that grows out of just owning a thing?"

Lily, it appeared, was amazed by the passion of the sudden outburst. For a time she lay back in the wicker chair, regarding her cousin with a thoughtful look. At last, she said, "I had no idea that you felt that way about it. It's the way Mama used to feel. I suppose I never had enough of the place to really hate it."

Ellen again interrupted her passionately. "If you'd had as much as I had, you'd have hated it all right."

"I just ran away from it as soon as I could," continued Lily. "Besides," she added after a pause, "Mama left a letter asking me to keep Cypress Hill. She always felt that way about the Town."

Ellen, persistent, bent over the table toward her cousin. The riding crop fell to the gravel terrace. "Promise me you won't sell it, Lily. . . . Promise me you'll keep it. It's a chance to hit back. . . . Promise!"

And Lily, who after all was indifferent in matters of business, promised, perhaps because the violent revelations made by her cousin astounded her so completely that she was unable to think of any argument. Doubtless she had reasons of her own . . . secret reasons which had to do with the worn clippings in the enameled box.

"I'll keep it," she replied. "They can wait until Hell freezes over. And besides you put the idea so that it amuses me. I'll sell the other stuff and invest the money."

Ellen interrupted her with a bitter laugh. "It's funny, you know, that all this time they've been pouring money into your pocket. That's the joke of it. In a way, it was all this booming and prosperity that helped me too. If you hadn't been so rich, I suppose I'd never have made a success of it."

Lily languidly finished the last of her chocolate. "I'd never thought of it in that way. It's an amusing idea."

Ellen was satisfied. Gathering up her letters she went into the house, changed her clothes, and in a little while, seated under the flaming Venice of Mr. Turner, she was working stormily at her music, filling the house with glorious sound until it overflowed and spilled its rhapsodies over the terrace into the garden where the first bright irises were abloom.

LXI

UPSTAIRS Lily made her way, after a toilette which occupied two hours, to the room of Madame Gigon. It was, amid the elegance of the house, a black-sheep of a room, its walls covered with books, its corners cluttered with broken fragments of Gothic saints and virgins, the sole legacy of the distant and obscure M. Gigon, curator at the Cluny Museum. In the center stood a table covered with dark red rep, heavily embroidered and cluttered with inkpots, pens and all the paraphernalia of writing. Bits of faded brocade ornamented the wall save for a space opposite the door where hung an immense engraving of the First Napoleon, dominating a smaller portrait of Napoleon the Little in all the glory of his mustaches and imperial. An engraving of the Eugénie by Winterhalter stood over the washstand, a convenience to which Madame Gigon clung even after Lily's installation of the most elaborate American plumbing.

Madame Gigon huddled like a benevolent old witch among the bedclothes of her diminutive bed. At the foot, in a bright patch of sunlight, lay Crique and Michou amiably close to each other and both quite stuffed with toasted rolls and hot chocolate.

Lily came in looking fresh and radiant in a severe suit and smart hat. They exchanged greetings.

"How are you this morning, Tante Louise?" she inquired of the old woman.

"Not so well . . . not so well. I slept badly. The pain in my hip."

Lily went and sat on the bed, taking the old woman's hand which she caressed as she felt her pulse.

"You have everything you want?" she inquired.

"Oui . . . everything." There was a little pause and

Madame Gigon peered at her with dim eyes. "I've been thinking how lucky I am."

Lily smiled.

"I mean that I'm not left poor and alone. You've been good to me."

Lily's smile expanded into a laugh. "Nonsense. . . . Nonsense. It's given me enough pleasure. . . ."

"It seems like the hand of God," said the old woman very piously.

"It may be," said Lily. "Mees Ellen has been telling me it's the hand of man."

And Madame Gigon, not having heard the talk on the terrace, was puzzled. Secretly she disapproved Mees Ellen's lack of piety.

"Mees Ellen plays well this morning . . . beautifully," said Madame Gigon. "She is an artist . . . a true artist. Will you ask her a favor?"

Lily nodded.

"Will you ask her to play something of Offenbach? I've been hungry for it." She looked feeble and appealing somewhat confused by violence of the life with which she found herself surrounded since the advent of Mees Ellen and the grown-up Jean.

"Of course," said Lily.

"And one more thing," said Madame Gigon. "This I must ask of you. . . . I'm too ill to go to Madame Blaise this afternoon. I want you to go and explain why I have not come. Tell her I am too ill." A slight frown crossed Lily's brow. Madame Gigon, with her dim eyes could not possibly have seen it, yet she said, "Madame Blaise admires you. . . . She thinks you are all that a woman should be . . . a perfect woman."

If Lily had felt any genuine hesitation, the faint flattery destroyed it, for she replied. "I'll go, certainly. I'm lunching out and I'll go there late and tell her."

"Not too late. . . . She is easily offended," said Madame Gigon. "You know she is a little . . ." She made a comic gesture indicating that Madame Blaise was a little cracked.

Then Lily read to her for a time out of Faure's History of

Art which undoubtedly bored her but gave Madame Gigon the greatest pleasure; and at last she left for her mysterious lunch. A little while later there arose from below stairs the tinkling melodies of the overture to Orpheus in the Underworld. Somewhere among the piles of old music in the drawing-room closet, Ellen had discovered the whole score and she played it now in a wild good humor. Sometimes the music became actually noisy in its triumphant violence. It was the playing of a woman who had achieved a victory.

LXII

IT is possible that Madame Blaise felt for Lily the admiration which Madame Gigon attributed to her, but she was such a queer old thing that it was impossible ever to know for a certainty. It could not be said that she revealed these sentiments by any open demonstration, or even by an occasional word of approval. There are women whose manner of showing their devotion assumes an inverted character; it takes to displaying itself in sharp criticisms of the object they love or admire. There are women who nag their lovers, who deprecate the charms of their own children, who sharply denounce the behavior of their dearest friends. And if there be any truth in this theory of inverted demonstration, it could be said that Madame Blaise admired Lily. Indeed judging from her behavior it could be said that she experienced a profound affection for the younger woman.

The old woman seldom addressed Lily, yet when Lily politely assumed the initiative and inquired after the health of Madame Blaise or her plans for the summer, Madame Blaise was flattered and smiled with all the warmth of an August sun. To Madame Gigon she criticized Lily unmercifully. She called her indolent, without ambition. She accused her of having wasted her life and permitted her beauty to fade without using its power. It was not true that Lily had faded, yet Madame Blaise was convinced of it. To have heard her talk, one would have thought Lily was a withered old harridan.

"I understand these things," she told Madame Gigon confidentially, "because I was a beauty myself . . . a famous beauty." And the memory of her triumphs led her to bridle and cast a glance at the nearest mirror. Yet she never spoke of these things to Lily, whose greater youth, already turning into middle-age, seemed to inspire the old woman with an awe tinged by actual worship.

"Why does she bury herself among these old women?" she would say. "Has she no energy . . . no zest for life? If only she could capture some of Mees Tolliver's *élan*. Mees Tolliver could spare her a great deal and be the more charming for it."

And to all this, Madame Gigon had one answer which it was her habit to repeat over and over again. "Madame Shane is content. Is not that enough? What more can any of us wish upon this earth?"

So it ran, this perpetual and carping interest of Madame Blaise. Although she avoided Lily, she could not resist discussing her. And Madame Gigon, believing firmly that Madame Blaise was a little cracked, never mentioned these things to Lily.

There hung about Madame Blaise something of the mystery which envelopes people suffering from delusions. Not only was it impossible to know when she was lying and when she was speaking the truth . . . it was impossible even to say, "Madame Blaise is thus and so. She is mean or she is benevolent. She is hostile or she is friendly." It was impossible to reach any sensible opinion concerning her. She was subject to the most absurd whims which rendered impossible any anticipation of her actions. Besides, she lived in a world of her own which resembled in no way the world of her friends, so bound up in shopkeepers, food, laundry, housekeeping, etc. Her world was inhabited by all sorts of fantastic and imaginary creatures. She believed passionately that she was still a fine figure of a woman. Not even a mirror could persuade her otherwise. She asserted with a challenging pugnacity that she had once played a prominent part in European politics, and hinted that she was the last of the women who would go down in history as creatures who ruled kings; but what it was she had done or when she had done it, no one could discover. The tragedy was that no one took her seriously. When one spoke of her, there was always a suspicion in the speech of that comic gesture which Madame Gigon used to indicate that her friend was a little cracked. Yet they were kind to her. No one allowed her to suspect that she was accepted generally as a mere pack of highly animated hallucinations. Indeed her *faiblesse* gave her the

whip hand over her friends. People humored her. They submitted to her insults with a calm good-nature.

When she began one of her long tales, people smiled and feigned interest and remarked, "How wonderful! Who would have thought it?" Or with mock protests, they would say, "But my dear Madame Blaise, you are still a fine figure of a woman." And she would go off home delighted that she had managed to preserve her figure and her youthful complexion, even if a bit of rouge was at times necessary. Her delight was always apparent. It was visible in every line of her seamed old face.

There were all sorts of stories concerning Madame Blaise, stories of the most fantastic and incredible nature, stories that she was well known in the generation which she had outlived, stories even that she had been the mistress of this or that politician. Indeed some of the most fantastic tales were contributed slyly by Madame Blaise herself. But no one really knew anything of her youth; and although every one repeated the stories with a certain relish, there was no one who really believed them.

The old women who came to Madame Gigon's salon knew that she had come to Paris some twenty years earlier as the widow of a merchant from Marseilles. She was rich, respected, and at that time seemed wholly in her right mind, save for an overfondness to surround herself with mystery. A respectable Bonapartist, the uncle of Captain Marchand, acted as her sponsor. She settled herself presently into the respectable circle. She had her *salon* and all went well. By now she had been accepted for so long a time that she seemed always to have been a part of that neat little society, so neat, so compact and so circumspect. She was a figure. Madame Blaise? Why, of course, every one knew Madame Blaise . . . always. What had gone before became quickly veiled in the mists of the past, and Madame Blaise, whose life may have been after all one of the most romantic and exciting, found herself a part of a singularly dull and prosaic society.

Lily could have known no more than this concerning the old woman. Indeed it is probable that she knew even less, for her good nature and her tolerant indifference had long since stifled

all her curiosity concerning people. She went to Madame Blaise on that Tuesday afternoon to please Madame Gigon, because she had no other engagement, and because she was accustomed to obliging her friends. She may even have suspected that the visit would give pleasure to Madame Blaise herself. She arrived very late as usual (it was impossible for Lily to be punctual) having lingered a long time over lunch and made an expensive tour of the shops in the Rue de la Paix.

In a little enclosure shaded by old trees and high, neglected shrubbery in Passy five minutes walk from the Trocadero, Madame Blaise had her house. The enclosure was shared by two other houses, less pretentious, which stood respectfully apart at a little distance. The dwelling was built of wood in imitation of a Swiss chalet, and ornamented with little carved balconies and fantastic ornaments in bizarre exaggeration of some cowherd's house on the mountains above Lucerne. A wall ran about the enclosure with an opening which was barred at night by a massive iron gate. Here Lily stepped down from the fiacre, passing, on her way through the gate, Madame de Cyon and the Marchands, who were leaving.

"You are late," observed Madame de Cyon, taking in Lily's costume with her small green eyes.

"I have been hurrying all the way," replied Lily. "I was kept by business."

Captain Marchand and his wife bowed gravely.

"Every one has gone," observed Madame de Cyon, waiting as though curious to see what Lily would do.

"Well, I must go in. . . . Madame Gigon was too ill to come. She asked me to convey her compliments."

Madame de Cyon brightened. "Nothing serious, I hope."

"No," said Lily. "Madame is an old woman. . . ." And then politely, "She tells me Monsieur de Cyon is back from the Balkans."

"Yes. He is full of wars and intrigues. You must come to me on Thursday. He has asked for you."

Lily smiled. "Please remember me to him. I find him very interesting." She turned suddenly. "But I must hurry on. It is disgusting to be so late. Good-by until Thursday."

Madame de Cyon laid a hand on her arm. "Madame Blaise

was eager that you should come. She has been asking for you."

"It is good of her," said Lily politely, at the same time moving away.

"Good-by until Thursday," said Madame de Cyon, and as Lily hurried into the shadows of the enclosure the Russian woman turned and looked after her, her small green eyes alight with an interest in which there was a shade of malice and envy. It was well known that de Cyon admired Madame Shane.

When Lily had disappeared in the thick shrubbery surrounding the house, Madame de Cyon made a clucking noise and passed through the gate into the street on her way to the Metro. She had lost money again to the Marchands. She was planning to economize.

LXIII

AT the door Lily was admitted by a fat Bretonne maid-servant who ushered her through a dark hall and up a dark stairway where the light was so bad that she was unable to distinguish any of the furnishings. It might have been a tunnel for all the impression it made upon a visitor. At a turn of the stairs she was forced to press her body against the wall in order to allow pass two strangers whom she had never seen at Madame Gigon's salon. At the top she was led through another hall lighted by a sort of chalice, with a gas flame burning inside a red globe suspended by Moorish chains from the low ceiling. Here it was possible to discern the most enormous quantity of furniture and decorations, bronze ornaments, bits of chinoiserie, pictures of all sizes in enormous gilt frames, umbrellas, cloaks, chairs, pillows and what not. At the end of the hall the maidservant opened the door of a large square room and silently indicated Madame Blaise who was seated before a gentle charcoal fire. Lily entered and the servant closed the door behind her.

Madame Blaise, dressed in old-fashioned gown of some thick black stuff, sat on the edge of her chair like a crow upon a wall. Her cheeks and lips were rouged and this, together with the red glow from the fire and the thick mass of dyed red hair, gave her an appearance completely bizarre and inhuman. She could not have heard Lily enter, for she did not look up until the younger woman came quite close to her and said, "Madame Blaise!"

"Ah!" said the old woman suddenly, as if waking from a dream. "It's you."

Lily was smiling and apologetic. She lied about being detained on business. She explained Madame Gigon's indisposition. Altogether she made herself charming, agreeable and insincere.

"Yes," said Madame Blaise. "Madame Gigon is old," in a tone which implied "much older than I shall ever be."

"I shan't stay but a moment," said Lily, sitting in a chair on the opposite side of the fire.

"No, I suppose not."

And then a silence fell during which it seemed that Madame Blaise returned again to her dream. Lily took off her gloves, straightened her hat and fell to regarding the room. It was an amazing room, full of shadows and indefinable and shapeless objects which danced in the dim gaslight. Gradually these things began to take shape. There were all sorts of chairs and tables and cushions of every fashion and period. The room fairly crawled with furniture. Near the fire stood a red lacquer table, exquisitely made, laden with the remnants of tea—a chocolate pot, a tea urn with the lamp extinguished and the tea growing cold, plates with sandwiches and gateaux. The windows were covered by thick curtains of some brocaded stuff which were drawn now to shut out the twilight. But the most remarkable feature of the room was the number of pictures. They hung in every conceivable nook and corner, standing upright in little frames of gilt bronze, tortoiseshell or ebony, leaning against the walls and against the mirror over the fireplace. Some, judging from the flamboyance and heroic note of the poses, were pictures of actresses and opera singers. Others from the pomposity of the subject were undoubtedly politicians. There were pictures of ladies in crinolines and gentlemen with beards or flowing mustaches. Some were photographs, faded and worn; others were sketches or prints clipped out of journals. There were at least a half dozen portraits in oil of varying degrees of excellence.

Lily occupied herself for a time in studying the room. At last Madame Blaise. "I am glad the others have gone. They weary me—inexpressibly." She leaned forward a little in her chair. "You understand I have had an interesting life. These others . . ." She made a stiff gesture of contempt. "What have they known of life? They go round and round like squirrels in a cage . . . always the same little circle. Always the same dull people."

Lily smiled agreeably. She was remarkably beautiful in the

soft light. "I understand," she said, with the air of humoring the old woman.

Madame Blaise rose suddenly. "But I forgot. . . . You must forgive me for not asking you sooner. Will you have some tea or some chocolate?"

"Nothing," said Lily. "I must think of my figure."

Madame Blaise sat down again. "I am glad you have come. . . ." And after a little pause, she added, "Alone." A frown contracted her brow beneath a neatly clipped bang. "You understand. . . . I think we have some things in common . . . you and I."

Lily still sat complacently. "I'm sure we have!" she said, purely to oblige her companion.

"But not what you suppose," said Madame Blaise looking at her sharply. "Not at all what you suppose. I am not speaking of the youth which we share . . . you and I. I am speaking rather of the qualities which have nothing to do with youth. I mean the capacity to love." This sentiment she uttered with a look of profound mystery. In spite of her eccentricity, there gleamed now and then through the cloud of mystery traces of a grand manner, a certain elusive distinction. It showed in a turn of the head, a gesture, an intonation . . . nothing very tangible, indeed, little more than a fleeting illusion.

Lily's eye began to wander once more, round and round the room to this picture and that, hesitating for a moment on one or another of the amazing collection which caught her fancy. When Madame Blaise fell silent once more for a long interval, she remarked,

"But have you no picture of yourself among all these?"

"No," replied the old woman. "I am coming to that later." And without pausing, she added, "You have had lovers of course." And when Lily, astounded by this sudden observation, stirred nervously in her chair, Madame Blaise raised her hand. "Oh, I know. I am not going to reproach you. I approve, you understand. It is what beautiful women are made for." Her eyes took on an uncanny look of shrewdness.

"Don't fancy that I am ignorant. Some people of course say that I am crazy. I am not. It's the others who are crazy, so they think that I am. But I understand. You have a lover

now. . . . He is Madame Gigon's cousin." She looked fiercely into Lily's face which had grown deathly pale at the crazy outburst of the old woman. She appeared frightened now. She did not even protest.

"I have watched," continued Madame Blaise, in the most intimate manner possible. "I understand these things. I know what a glance can mean . . . a gesture, a sudden unguarded word. You, my dear, have not always been as cautious, as discreet, as you might have been. You needn't fear. I shall say nothing. I shall not betray you." She reached over and touched Lily's hand with an air of great confidence. "You see, we are alike. We are as one. It is necessary for us to fight these other women . . . like de Cyon. She is a cat, you understand."

Lily, all her complacency vanished now, glanced at the watch on her wrist. She stood up and walked to the fireplace in an effort to break the way toward escape. She was, it appeared, unable to collect her wits so that she might deal with Madame Blaise.

"You must not go yet," continued the harridan. "I have so much to tell you." She pursed her withered lips reflectively and put her head a little on one side. "When I was a young girl, I was very like you. You can see that my hair is still the same. People notice and remark how beautifully it has kept its color. Oh yes, many have spoken to me of it. There is nothing like preserving your beauty." And at this she chuckled a little wildly with an air of savage triumph.

LXIV

SO she talked for what must have seemed to Lily hour upon hour. When the younger woman betrayed any sign of leaving, Madame Blaise thrust her tall thin body between her and the door. Even if Lily had desired to speak she would have found small opportunity, for Madame Blaise never once stopped talking. It was as if all the talk of years, repressed and hidden, was suddenly rushing forth in a torrent. The room became intolerably stuffy from the burning gas. Lily's head began to ache and her face to grow more and more pale. If she had been less pleasant by nature she would have made her way by force past the old woman and out into the open air. As it was, she kept hoping, no doubt, that Madame Blaise would come to an end of her talk, that some one would come in and interrupt her . . . the maid perhaps . . . any one. She no longer heard what Madame Blaise was saying. The talk came to her in fragments, the inexpressibly boring chatter of a cracked old woman. To break the monotony she took up the pictures on the mantelpiece and began to examine them. During a brief pause, she observed. "Your pictures are interesting, Madame Blaise. I should like to call again when I have more time, in order to see them all."

"Ah, yes," said the old woman. "So they are . . . so they are. The men . . . they were not all lovers you understand. But I might have had them for lovers by the raising of my finger."

"This one," said Lily, holding up the portrait of a heavily built man wearing the mustachios of a dragoon. "He is interesting."

"Yes . . . yes. He was a Spaniard . . . a nobleman, very aristocratic. Dead now. . . . Extraordinary how many of them are dead!"

Then all at once the attention of Madame Blaise was

arrested by the most extraordinary change in her companion. So remarkable was the change that the old woman actually stopped talking and fell to observing the face of Madame Shane.

Lily held in her hand a small photograph, very faded and soiled, of a man in a black coat with sharp eyes, a high brow and a full black beard. It bore in one corner the stamp of a well-known photographer of the seventies, a gentleman with an establishment in the Galerie des Panoramas. It was a handsome face, fascinating, fanatic, which at once arrested the attention. Beyond all doubt it was the mate of a photograph which Julia Shane, dying, had left to her daughter. Across the face of the one Lily held in her hand was written, "*À la Reine de la Nuit de son Cavalier Irlandais.*" The ink was faded, almost illegible.

"You find that gentleman especially interesting?" asked Madame Blaise in a tone of unbearable curiosity.

For a moment Lily did not reply. She regarded the photograph closely, turning it this way and that under the gaslight.

"Yes," she said at last in a low, hushed voice. "Who is he?"

Madame Blaise bridled. "He was a gentleman . . . very interesting," she said. "He admired me . . . greatly. The inscription? It was a joke between us. He was full of deviltry and fun (*un vrai diable . . . tout gamin*). I have forgotten what the joke was. . . . He was forced to leave the country by some unpleasantness. . . . I too went away for a time." And again her eyes narrowed in a mysterious look, invoking romantic, glamorous things. Lily, the picture still clasped in her hand, sat down weakly.

Above all else, old photographs have the power of calling up dead memories. It is so perhaps because they are so terribly, so cruelly, realistic. Those things which the memory, desiring to forget, succeeds in losing among the shadows of time, remain in a photograph so long as it exists . . . the posture of a head, the betraying affected gesture of a hand, the manner of carrying oneself, the arrogance of countenance, the habit of dress . . . all these things survive on a bit of paper no larger perhaps than the palm of one's hand.

The photograph with "*A la Reine de la Nuit*" written across

it must have invoked forgotten things . . . memories of John Shane's savage temper and whimsical kindnesses, of terrible scenes between him and his proud wife, of his contempt for the anemic Irene and his admiration for the glowing Lily, of a thousand things distant yet appallingly vivid.

While Lily sat thoughtful and silent, Madame Blaise kept up a stream of hysterical chatter, turning crazily from one subject to another, from personalities to anecdotes, from advice to warning. Lily heard none of it. When she had recovered a little, she said, "This gentleman interests me. I wish you could tell me more of him."

But Madame Blaise shook her head ruefully. "I have forgotten so much," she said. "It is terrible how one forgets. Do you know?" And again the look of mad confidence came into her face. "I have forgotten his name. What is it he calls himself in the inscription?"

She took the photograph from Lily's hand and thrust it under the circle of light, holding it at arm's length and squinting in order to discern it properly. "Ah, yes," she said. "*Cavalier Irlandais*. . . . That was his name. I don't remember his other name, though I believe he had one." She paused, thoughtful, as if trying by a tremendous force of will to recapture the thing which had escaped her. "His father was Irish, you understand. . . . Strange I can't remember his name." So she talked on crazily, answering Lily's questions madly, tangling the answers hopelessly in a flood of insane philosophy and distorted observation. The look of mystery and the remnants of a grand manner persisted. Lily watched her with a look of intense curiosity as if she believed that, after all, the queer old creature might once have been young,—young, mysterious and lovely. But she learned little of the gentleman in the portrait. It was impossible for Madame Blaise to concentrate upon her subject. Lily learned only that the gentleman had been forced to leave the country following some unpleasantness arising out of a duel in which he had killed a relative . . . a cousin perhaps. She did not remember. He had been in politics too. That played a part in his flight. He returned once, Madame Blaise believed, but she did not remember why he had come back.

Altogether it was hopeless. Lily replaced the photograph on the high mantel, powdered her nose and drew on her gloves. Presently there came an opening in the flood of Madame Blaise' talk and Lily seized it sharply.

"I must really go, Madame Blaise. I have stayed much too long. It has been so interesting."

She rose and began to move slowly backward in the direction of the door, as if she feared to rouse the old woman to fresh outbursts. She made her departure gently, vanishing noiselessly; but she got no further than the inlaid music box when Madame Blaise, detecting her plan, sprang up and seized her arm fiercely with her thin old hands.

"Wait!" she cried. "There is one more thing I must show you . . . only one. It will take but a second."

The patient Lily acquiesced, though she kept up a mild protest. Madame Blaise scurried away, rather sidewise as a crab moves, into a dark corner of the room where she disappeared for an instant through a door. When she returned, she bore two dusty paintings in oil. Each was surrounded by a heavy gilt frame and together the pair burdened the strength of the old woman. Her whole manner reeked of secrecy. With an air of triumph she smiled to herself as she took from the chair where she had been sitting a red silk handkerchief with which she dusted the faces of the two paintings. All this time she kept them turned from Lily. At last she stiffened her thin body suddenly and said sharply, "Now, look!"

Lily, bending low, discerned in the light from the fire the character of the two pictures. Each was the portrait of a woman, painted in the smooth, skilful, slightly hard manner of Ingres. Yet there was a difference, which the connoisseur's eye of Lily must have detected. They were cleverly done with a too great facility. But for that one might almost have said they were the work of a genius. Clearly the same woman had posed for both. In one she wore an enormous drooping hat, tilted a little over one eye. In the other she wore a barbaric crown and robes of Byzantine splendor.

Madame Blaise stood by with the air of a great art collector displaying his treasures. "They are beautiful, aren't they?" she said. "Superb! You know I understand these things.

I have never shown them to any one in years. I am showing them to you because I know you understand these things. I have seen your house. I have seen your beautiful things. You see it is the same woman who posed for both. . . . The one is called 'The Girl in the Hat' . . . the other is 'The Byzantine Empress.' Theodora, you know, who was born a slave girl."

LILY, it seemed, had scarcely heard her. She had taken one of the pictures on her lap and was examining it minutely. She held it close to her and then at a little distance. Madame Blaise stood surveying her treasures proudly, her face lighted by a look of satisfaction at Lily's profound interest.

"I wonder," said the old woman presently, "if you see what I see."

For a moment Lily did not answer. She was still fascinated by the pictures. At last she looked up. "Do you mean the woman is like me? Did you see it too?"

Madame Blaise assumed a secretive expression. "Yes," she said. "I have known it all along . . . ever since I saw you. But I never told any one. I kept it as a secret for you." And she spread her skinny hands in an exhibitivè gesture, full of satisfaction, of pride, even of triumph.

The likeness was unmistakable. Indeed, upon closer examination it was nothing short of extraordinary. It might have been the Lily of ten years earlier, when she was less heavy and opulent. The Byzantine Empress had the same soft bronze hair, the same green-white skin, the same sensuous red lips.

"It is like me when I was younger."

"Very much," observed Madame Blaise, and then with the air of an empress bestowing a dazzling favor, she added, "I am going to give them to you."

"But they are valuable," protested Lily. "I can see that. They are no ordinary paintings." She spoke without raising her eyes, continuing all the while to examine the pictures, first one and then the other as she frequently examined with infinite care the reflection in her mirror in the Rue Raynouard.

"I realize that you could not carry them home alone," continued Madame Blaise, ignoring her protests. "You might

appear ridiculous. You might even be arrested on suspicion. But I shall have them sent round. I must give them to you. What would you have me do? When I die they will be sold. I have no relatives . . . no one. My sister is dead these ten years. I have no child . . . nothing. I am alone, you understand, absolutely alone. Would you have my pictures knocking about some art dealer's place?"

She shook her head savagely. "No, you must have them. You cannot refuse. It is the hand of God in the matter. I understand these things because there is in me something of the woman of all time. The pictures are for you. Nothing can dissuade me."

Again the good-natured Lily was forced to yield, simply by the force of the old woman's crazy will. She must have sensed the fantastic, uncanny quality of the entire affair, for she stirred uneasily and put the Byzantine Empress on the floor, face down. The Girl in the Hat lay across her knees, forgotten for the moment.

Madame Blaise had begun to walk up and down the room in a crazy fashion, muttering to herself. All at once she halted again before Lily.

"It was a famous woman who sat for those pictures," she said. "You could never imagine who she really was."

Vaguely, as if she had been absent from the room for a long time, Lily replied. "No. I'm sure I have no idea. How could I? She was evidently a great beauty."

A look of delight swept the countenance of the old woman. "Wait!" she cried. "Wait! I will make it easy for you. In one moment you will understand!" And she scurried away once more into the dusty closet from which she had brought the pictures. While she was absent Lily leaned back in her chair closing her eyes and pressing a hand against her forehead. For some time she remained thus and when, at last, she opened her eyes at the sharp command of Madame Blaise she found the old woman standing before her with the big hat of the girl in the picture drooped over one eye.

The effect was grotesque, even horrible. Madame Blaise had arranged the dress of black stuff so that her breasts and shoulders were exposed in the fashion of the Girl in the Hat;

but the ripe full breasts of the girl in the picture were in the old woman sunken and withered, the color of dusty paper; the gentle soft curve of the throat was shrunken and flabby, and the soft glow of the face and the fresh carmine of the caressing, sensuous lips were grotesquely simulated with hard rouge, and powder which had caked in little channels on the wrinkled face of the old woman. Even the bit of hair which showed beneath the big hat was travestied horribly by dye. Madame Blaise simpered weakly in imitation of the mysterious, youthful smile which curved the lips of the girl in the picture.

There could be no mistake. The features were there, the same modeling, the same indefinable spirit. Madame Blaise was the Byzantine Empress and the Girl in the Hat. The caricature was cruel, relentless, bitter beyond the power of imagination. Lily's eyes widened with the horror of one who has seen an unspeakable ghost. She trembled and the Girl in the Hat slipped from her knee and fell with a clatter face downward upon the Byzantine Empress.

Madame Blaise had begun to walk up and down the room with the languid air of a mannequin. The big hat flopped as she moved. Turning her head coyly, she said, "I have not changed. You see, I am almost the same."

And then she fell to talking rapidly to herself, holding un-earthly conversations with men and women who stood in the dark corners of the room among the innumerable pictures and bits of decaying bric-a-brac. Crossing the room she passed near Lily's chair where, halting for a second, she bent down until her painted cheek touched Lily's soft hair. "You see," she cried, pointing toward the dusty closet, "that one over there. . . . He would give his life to have me." She laughed a crazy laugh. "But no . . . not I. Never yield too easily and yield only for love. Live only for love." And she moved off again on her mad promenade, gibbering, bowing and smiling into the dusty corners.

In the midst of a tête-à-tête which the old woman held with an invisible beau whom she addressed as "Your Highness," Lily sprang up and ran toward the door. Opening it, she rushed through the upper hall down the stairway into the dark tunnel below. As the outer door slammed behind her, it shut

in the sound of Madame Blaise' cracked singing, punctuated by peals of crazy laughter.

Lily did not stop running until she passed the gate of the little enclosure and stood, breathless and fainting with terror, beneath the lights of the Rue d'Assomption.

THEY passed the summer at Germigny-l'Évec in the lodge on the terrace above the winding Marne. The little house at Houlgate kept its shutters up all through the hot months. It is true that the health of Madame Gigon was none too good. It is true too that she might have benefited by the sea air. Although Lily mentioned the migration once or twice as the summer advanced she did not insist upon it. Madame Gigon, it appeared, preferred the house where she had always passed her summers, and Lily was content to remain there as the weeks passed through June and into a hot and breathless July. It seemed that, for the first time, she was tired. Indolent by nature, she had reserves of energy which could be roused when the occasion arose. But it appeared that this occasion was not one of sufficient importance; so she remained quietly, reading, walking by the Marne; sometimes in the early morning when the weather was not too hot, she even rode one of the Baron's horses along the paths of the wood on the opposite side of the river near Trilport.

For diversion the pair were visited by Jean who came romping down from St. Cyr for a brief holiday now and then, always looking handsome and behaving with the ferocity appropriate to a budding cavalryman. Ellen came too, but her visits tired her cousin, especially during the hot months. While she was there Lily pretended that she did not ride because Ellen made riding impossible for her. Ellen insisted upon riding at top speed. She searched for stone walls to jump. She even swam her horse through the Marne on one hot morning in July. Unlike Lily she made no effort to preserve her complexion. She became as tanned as an Indian and as hard as an athlete. Jean admired her enormously, and together they careered wildly across country; for Ellen sat her saddle lightly and as well as any man. Indeed she was as good as a boy for a companion.

She even enjoyed the risqué barracks jokes which Jean told her. She listened to the ballads he sang, the bawdy ballads of the cavalry, old songs filled with the traditions of Napoleon's army . . . the same ballads which Lily sang to herself as she dressed for the last ball ever given at Cypress Hill.

Ellen could swear too, in English or in bad French. They became great friends. Lily saw them off in the mornings from her window, looking after them with an expression of mingled envy and regret in her dusky blue eyes. She must have envied the pair their youth. She was jealous of Ellen as she was always jealous of any one for whom Jean showed affection.

But an end came to the early morning excursions when Ellen in August sailed for New York to spend a month with her mother and father. They lived in a little house on Long Island; for Hattie Tolliver, since her children had become successful, no longer kept a rooming house in Manhattan.

"Pa is content now," Ellen said. "He's got a horse and a garden and chickens. That's what he always wanted. Ma is too. But it's different with her. She ought to have another complete family of children. She's never gotten over being a mother. She wants us to stay with her always. She can't bear having us grown up."

It was true. The more successful her children became, the less Hattie Tolliver saw of them.

"It is a warning," said Ellen, "never to be too fond of your children." She laughed ironically. "And yet, if it hadn't been for Ma, I don't suppose I'd be where I am . . . or Fergus or Robert either. She brought us up well. She made us ambitious." And she concluded the speech with the remark that "it was a damned funny world anyway." She had never seen any one who was content.

There had been a time, even a little while before, when she might have said that Lily was the supreme example of contentment, but that time seemed to have passed. Lily was clearly unhappy during that summer. She became more grave and quiet. She was content only when the Baron came down to stay for a week or two and rode with her through the mists of the early summer mornings. When he had gone again, the vague restlessness returned.

Madame Gigon grew to be more and more of a care; and added to the calamities, Criquette on short notice gave birth to a family of puppies of which it appeared the black and tan at the farm was the father. Somehow Madame Gigon took this as a betrayal on the part of the hitherto virginal Criquette. She complained of it as if Criquette had been her own daughter, as indeed she might well have been for the affection and care lavished upon her by the blind old woman. She succumbed completely to her arthritis and lay most of the day in a chair under the clipped linden trees, wearing an injured, fretful air when Lily was not by her side to talk or read to her. Indeed it appeared that between the riotous visits of Jean and Nellie a grayness had descended upon the lodge.

LXVII

IT may have been that Madame Blaise played her part in the depression. After the night that Lily ran out of her house, she never saw the crazy old woman again, for a day or two later Madame Blaise, in a purple hat and a bright Venetian shawl, was led away on the promise of a wonderful adventure to a house in Versailles where well-to-do lunatics were cared for and allowed to indulge to the utmost their idiosyncrasies. Her guardian was none other than the handsome and distinguished M. de Cyon, who with his brother, a lawyer, looked after the old woman's property. She seemed completely happy in the new establishment, so M. de Cyon reported, because she found there an elderly wine merchant who believed himself descended from Henri Quatre and Diane de Poitiers, and therefore the rightful heir to the French throne. Together they spent their days plotting intrigues and revolutions by which he was to be set upon the throne with Madame Blaise as his consort. So there was no opportunity for Lily to wring from the old woman any further information regarding the photograph of the handsome gentleman in the black beard. The photograph together with the hundreds of other pictures, was packed away in a cavernous storehouse in Montparnasse when the furniture was cleared out of the chalet in the enclosure near the Trocadero and it was let to an Englishwoman interested in art. Life, as old Julia Shane said, was after all no story book in which everything was revealed. Every man had secrets which he carried into the grave.

But before Madame Blaise was led away, she kept her threat and sent round to the house in the Rue Raynouard *The Byzantine Empress* and *The Girl in the Hat*. The pictures were left there by the driver of a battered fiacre who went off immediately. To Lily, the pictures had become objects of horror. She would not see them. She bade the housekeeper

put them away in the top room of the house where she could not possibly find them. When they arrived she was still in bed, suffering from a wild headache that did not leave her for days after the experience with Madame Blaise.

"It was horrible," she told Ellen. "More horrible than you can imagine, to see that old devil dancing before me like an omen . . . a warning of old age. If you had seen her . . . so like me in the pictures . . . so like me even in the reality, like me as I might easily be some day. It was horrible . . . horrible!" And she buried her face in her hands.

Ellen, as usual, consulted Madame Gigon.

"She is really ill, this time," she said. "It isn't that she's just tired. She's frightened by something. She's much worse than she's ever been before."

And they sent for a physician, a great bearded man, recommended by Madame de Cyon, who diagnosed the case as a *crise de nerfs* and bade her go at once to the lodge in the country. The servants remarked that Madame seemed ill and tired for the first time in her life.

After a time she appeared to forget the mysterious photograph. It was clear that her father was destined to remain, as he had always been, a solitary, fascinating, malevolent figure translated by some turn of circumstance from the intrigues of the old world into the frontier life of the new. What lay in the past—murder, disgrace, conspiracy—must remain hidden, the secret of the dead and of a mad old woman who in her youth and beauty had been his mistress at the very moment that his bride struggled in the school at St. Cloud to learn the tricks of a great lady. Out of all the mystery only one thing seemed clear—that Lily was his favorite child; and now the reason seemed clear enough. By some whim of Fate she was like The Girl in the Hat, the lovely creature who was now Madame Blaise.

So the *crise de nerfs* persisted throughout the summer. Indeed there were times when it appeared that Lily was on the verge of a settled melancholia, times when she would walk in solitude for hours along the towpaths beneath the mottled limbs of the plane trees. Yet her beauty persisted. She might have been a goddess . . . Ceres . . . as she walked along the green

path, bordered on one side by the Marne and on the other by waving fields of yellow grain.

As the weeks passed she suffered increasing annoyance through the persistent efforts of the Town to acquire the property at Cypress Hill. A dozen times a month letters arrived from Folsom and Jones, pressing letters that carried threats which Folsom and Jones passed along smoothly with all the suavity of true lawyers playing both ends against the middle. Indeed, from the tone of certain of the communications it appeared that they too, although they were Lily's agents and paid by her, believed that the interests of the Town surmounted those of their client. Its growth, they wrote, was stupendous. It was rapidly becoming one of the greatest steel centers in the world. If she could only be induced to return for a visit, she would understand the anxiety of the Town council to acquire the holdings at Cypress Hill. Surely she could understand that while sentiment was a commendable thing, it had its place. One could be too sentimental about a situation. The price offered was excellent. ("But not so excellent as it will be in another five years," thought Lily with a certain malice.) The house brought her no return. She only paid taxes on it. And so on, for page after page, letter after letter.

All this, no doubt, sounded reasonable enough, but Lily reading those letters aloud to Madame Gigon, who desired to be read aloud to no matter what the material, would murmur irritably, "Why the devil can't they leave me in peace? Go back and visit that place? My God! What for?" And then sarcastically, "To see Eva Barr, I suppose. I'm sure I'm not interested in their prosperity."

And she would write again that she had no intention of selling and that the more they annoyed her the less she was likely to alter her decision.

It may have been that she enjoyed the sense of power with which the possession of Cypress Hill endowed her . . . a feature she had not realized until it was shown her by Ellen. It may have been that she was simply tired and a little perverse and ill-natured. And it was true that she had not the slightest interest in the money involved. Indeed she had no idea how rich she was. Each year she spent what she desired to

spend, and never did she come to the end of her income. What more could she desire? What could she do with more money?

But it is also more than probable that somewhere far back in the dark recesses of her consciousness, there were memories which kindled as she grew older, new fires of resentment against the Mills and the Town and all the things they stood for . . . memories of her mother's open hatred for the Harrisons and Judge Weissman, memories of a terrible night when men and women were shot down under the dead trees of the park, memories of an heroic, unattainable figure, wounded and bloody, but undefeated . . . a figure which doubtless grew in fascination as it receded into the past. It is true, too, that there is sometimes greater peace, even greater happiness, in renunciation than in fulfilment. What has never been a reality, may remain a fine dream. Krylenko had never been more than this.

And so the affair ran on until one evening in September Eustache, the farmer's boy, brought back from Meaux a small envelope bearing the post mark of the Town and addressed in the scrawled, illiterate handwriting of old Hennery. It recounted briefly the end of the house of Cypress Hill. It had caught fire mysteriously in the night and before dawn nothing remained save a hole in the ground filled with the scorched and blackened fragments of fine old carpets, mirrors, jade, crystals, carved chests and old chairs, all the beautiful things which encumbered the site of the proposed railroad station.

The mulatto woman, Hennery wrote with difficulty and the most atrocious spelling, swore that she saw two men running away from the house after the fire began. The police, he added, had been able to find no trace of them.

And the following day Lily received a polite letter from Folsom and Jones giving her a brief account of the catastrophe. They also mentioned the story told by the mulatto woman. They believed, however, that it was simply the crazy imagining of a demented old woman.

"Perhaps now," the letter concluded, "Miss Shane would desire to rid herself of a property that could no longer hold her even by ties of sentiment."

LXVIII

LILY did not sell and for a time the letters of Folsom and Jones ceased to arrive regularly. Since all her property in the Town was sold save the site of the house at Cypress Hill, there remained no cause for correspondence. Her money she invested through the American banks in Paris. She heard nothing more of the Town until November when she returned to the city. The prospect of a winter in Paris appeared to revive her spirits, and she went, as usual, to hear Ellen play her first concert of the season. That year Lilli Barr played a new Poem with the Colonne Orchestra under the bâton of the elegant Gabriel Pierné. The performance was not a great success. There was too little sympathy between the scholarly soul of the conductor and the vigorous, barbaric temperament of the pianist. Yet it was Ellen who came off best, bearing all the laurels, with all the simpering critics trotting attendance. "Mlle. Barr," they said, "has the perfect temperament for it . . . the superb adjustment of soul and intellect indispensable to the interpretation of such febrile music. It is music which requires a certain coldness of brain, a perception delicate and piercing . . . a thing of the nerves." And so they ran on, wallowing in their delight for the *mot juste*, praising more extravagantly than was either honest or in good taste. One or two saw an opportunity in the praise of hitting a back handed slap at the conductor and his orchestra.

It was M. Galivant, critic of the *Journal des Arts Modernes*, who hit upon the phrases "febrile music" and "delicate perception." He showed Lilli Barr the article in the salon after the concert, with the keys of the great piano barely cool from her hot fingers.

"Pish! Tosh!" she remarked to Lily who waited for her in the dressing room. "Did you see what Galivant has written?"

It's too exquisite for me. To hear them talk, you'd think I took the veil for months at a time just to meditate what my music is all about. I know what it's about and I don't want praise that's written before they hear me play, just because I help their modern music along. Nerves! Nerves! I haven't got such things!"

Yet she was, as always after a concert, tense and nervous, filled with a terrible energy which would not let her sleep until dawn. To-night she wore a long tight gown of cloth of silver, without sleeves and girdled by a single chain of rhinestones. With her dark hair drawn tightly back, she resembled a fine greyhound—lean, muscular, quivering.

"At least they liked it," said Lily, "judging from the applause." She sat waiting in a long cloak of black velvet, held together with silver clasps.

There was a sudden knock at the door and Lily murmured "Come in." It was the porter, a lean, sallow, man with a stoop and enormous black mustaches.

"There is a gentleman to see Madame l'artiste," he said.

Ellen turned. "Who it it?"

The man grimaced. "How should I know? He says he knows you."

A shadow of irritation crossed Ellen's smooth brow. "If he wants to see me, tell him to send in his name." And then to Lily as the porter withdrew, "You see what fame is. The porter doesn't even know my name. He calls me Madame l'artiste . . . Madame indeed! He hasn't even bothered to read the bills."

The fellow returned again, this time opening the door without the courtesy of a knock.

"His name, Madame, is 'arrisong."

Ellen pursed her lips thoughtfully and struck a match on the sole of her slipper, holding the flame to the cigarette in her strong slim fingers.

"Harrison? . . . Harrison?" she repeated, holding the cigarette between her lips and the lighted match poised. "I don't know any Harrison. . . . Tell him to come in."

The stranger must have been waiting just outside the door, for at the word he stepped timidly inside. He was dressed in

black and wore a derby hat set well on the back of his head. Over one arm hung an umbrella. He was rather sallow and macabre despite his plumpness. There was the faint air of an undertaker about him. He might have been any age.

As he advanced he smiled and, observing Lily, his countenance assumed an expression of surprise. Ellen gave no sign of recognition. It was Lily who stirred suddenly and stood up, her face glowing with a genuine spontaneous pleasure.

"Willie Harrison!" she cried. "Where have you come from?"

At the sound of his name Ellen's smooth brow wrinkled in a slight frown. "Willie Harrison," she murmured, and then joined Lily in welcoming him.

For a moment he stood awkwardly regarding the two women. Then he said, "I came to your concert, Ellen. . . . I saw it advertised in the Herald. I knew you were Lilli Barr." He chortled nervously. "Funny how famous you are now! Nobody ever would have thought it!"

The sight of Willie appeared suddenly to loosen all Ellen's taut nerves. She sat down, leaned back in the chair, and laughed. "Yes. I fooled them, didn't I?" she said. "I fooled them." And a sort of grim satisfaction entered her voice.

Lily was smiling now, out of sheer pleasure at the sight of Willie. It amused her probably more than anything that could have happened to her at that moment.

"But what on earth are you doing in Paris?"

From the tone of her voice, it was clear that she regarded his presence as a sort of miracle. . . . That Willie Harrison should have had the energy to cross the Atlantic and wander about alone in Paris.

Willie sat down, rather stiffly, and told his story. He was with a Cook's party. His tour included London, Paris, the château country and Switzerland. He was leaving shortly.

"It's been a wonderful trip," he remarked, his plump face all aglow. "I'd no idea how much country there was over here."

"Yes," said Ellen, "there's a good deal, taking it all in all." She said this with an undisguised air of patronizing him. It was she who was great now, she who held the whip hand. She was no longer an awkward girl in a home-made ball

gown so unpretentious that men like Willie Harrison failed to notice her.

But Willie failed to understand. He was childishly excited over Paris. "It's a great city!" he observed, fingering nervously the ruby clasp of his watch chain. "A great city!"

Lily stood up suddenly.

"Willie," she said, "come home and have supper with us." And turning to Ellen she added, "Paul will be waiting for us. He must be there already." And to Willie, "Paul is Monsieur Schneidermann, a friend of Ellen's and mine."

Willie rose. "I don't know," he said timidly. "Maybe you aren't prepared for me. Maybe I'd be in the way. I didn't mean to force my way in on anything when I called. It was just for the sake of old times."

Lily, moved toward the door trailing the magnificent cloak of black and silver. She thrust her arm through his. "Come along, Willie," she said. "No nonsense. Why, we grew up together."

And they went out, Ellen following them in her plum-colored wrap, to the motor which bore on its polished door the crest of the Baron.

Throughout the journey Willie kept poking his head in and out of the closed motor, drinking in the sights along the way . . . the hushed, shadowy mass of the Madeleine, the warm glow before Maxims', the ghostly spaces of the Place de la Concorde, the white palaces of the Champs Elysées. Ellen in her corner remained sulky and taciturn, smoking savagely. Lily talked merrily, pointing out from time to time sights which she deemed worthy of Willie's appreciation. He seemed not to be listening.

"It's a wonderful place," he kept saying over and over again. "It's a wonderful place." And a kind of pathetic and beautiful awe crept into his thin voice. It seemed that he had no other words than "wonderful." He kept repeating it again and again like a drunken man holding a conversation with himself.

At Numero Dix, Rue Raynouard, Willie underwent the experience of every stranger. He entered by the unpretentious door and found himself suddenly at the top of a long, amazing stairway which led down to a drawing-room all rosy with the

glow of warm light. Half-way down the stairs candles burned in sconces against the dull paneling. From below drifted the faint sound of music . . . a Debussy nocturne being played with caressing fingers in the shadowy, dim-lit spaces of the drawing-room.

"Paul is here," observed Ellen and led the way down the long stairs.

Lily followed and close at her silver heels Willie Harrison, divested now of his derby and umbrella. Half-way down, he paused for a moment and Lily, conscious that he had ceased to follow her, waited too. As she turned she saw that he was listening. There was a strange blurred look in his pale eyes . . . the look of one awaking from a long sleep.

"It's beautiful," he said reverently. "My God! It's beautiful!" A kind of dignity seized him. He was no longer gauche and timid. He stared at Lily who stood with her back to a mirror, the black and silver cloak thrown carelessly back from her voluptuous white shoulders, her handsome head crowned with gold bronze hair. And then all at once the tears shone in his eyes. He leaned against the paneling.

"I understand now," he said softly. "I understand . . . everything. I know now how little I must have counted. . . . me and all the Mills together."

And in Lily's eyes there was mirrored another picture . . . that of a vast resounding shed bright with flames and thick with the odor of soot and half-naked bodies . . . Willie, eternally fingering the ruby clasp of his watch chain, herself turning the rings round and round on her slim fingers, and in the distance the white, stalwart body of a young Ukrainian steel worker . . . a mere boy . . . but beautiful. Krylenko was his name . . . Krylenko . . . Krylenko . . . It was a long time ago, more than fourteen years. How time flew!

Lily's dusky blue eyes darkened suddenly and the tears brimmed over. Perhaps it came to her then for the first time . . . a sense of life, of a beautiful yet tragic unity, of a force which swept both of them along helplessly.

All at once she held her handkerchief, quite shamelessly, to her eyes. "We are beginning to be old, Willie," she said softly. "Do you feel it too?"

And she turned and led the way downwards. The music had ceased and the voices of Ellen and Paul Schneidermann rose in dispute. They were arguing with a youthful fire over the merits of the new concerto.

"Here," came Ellen's voice. "This part. It is superb!" And then the sound of a wild, ecstatic sweep of music, terrifying and beautiful. "You understand the strings help a great deal. Part of it lies in the accompaniment." And she began singing the accompaniment as she played.

But Lily with her companion trooping along behind her, did not interrupt the discussion. They made their way, enveloped in a peaceful silence, into the dining-room where supper waited them—some sort of hot stuff in a silver dish with an alcohol flame burning beneath it, an urn steaming with hot chocolate, a bowl of whipped cream, a few sandwiches—superlatively French sandwiches, very thin and crustless with the faintest edge of buff colored paté showing between the transparent slices of white bread. It was all exquisite, perfect, flawless.

"Sit down," said Lily, as she flung off the black and silver cloak. "Sit down and tell me all about yourself."

Willie drew up a chair. "I shan't be able to stay very late," he said. "You see, I'm leaving early in the morning." He watched Lily fumbling with the lamp beneath the urn. She was plumper than he had expected. Indeed she was almost fat. There was a faint air of middle-age about her, indiscernable but unmistakably present.

"What about yourself?" he asked politely. "What has your life been?"

Lily kept on turning and pushing at the silver burner. "My life?" she said. "Well, you see it all about you, Willie." She made a little gesture to include the long, softly glittering rooms, Ellen, the piano, Paul Schneidermann. "It's just been this," she said. "Nothing more . . . nothing less. Not much has happened." For a moment she stopped her fumbling and sat thoughtful. "Not much has happened," and then after another pause, "No, scarcely anything."

There was a sudden, sharp silence, filled by the sound of

Ellen's music. She had become absorbed in it, utterly. It was impossible to say when she would come in to supper.

Then Willie, in an attempt at courtliness, strained the truth somewhat. "You don't look a day older, Lily . . . not a day. . . . Just the same. It's remarkable."

His companion lifted the lid of the chafing dish. "Some hot chicken, Willie?" she asked, and when he nodded, "I must say you look younger . . . ten years younger than the last time I saw you. Why, you look as though you'd forgotten the Mills . . . completely."

Willie laughed. It was a curious elated laugh, a little wild for all its softness.

"I have," he said. "You see I'm out of the Mills for good. I've been out of them for almost seven years."

Lily looked at him. "Seven years," she said, "seven years! Why that's since the strike. You must have gotten out at the same time."

"I did," he replied, "I own some stock. That's all. Judge Weissman is dead, you know. When mother died, the old crowd went out of it for good. All the Mills are now a part of the Amalgamated."

LXIX

THUS in a few words, he sketched the passing of one epoch and its succession by another. The day of the small private enterprise in the Town had passed, succeeded by the day of the great corporation. Everything was owned now by capitalists, by stockholders who never saw the Mills, to whom the workers of the Flats were little more than mythical creatures, animated engines without minds or souls, whose only symbol of existence was the dividend twice a year. Machines they were . . . machines . . . dim machines . . . not in the least real or human.

Most of the tale Willie omitted. He did not tell of the monkey-faced little man who came to the Town representing the Amalgamated. Nor did he tell of the monkey-faced man's address to the Chamber of Commerce in which he talked a great deal of Jesus and declared that religion was what the world most needed, religion and a sense of fellowship between men. He did not tell of how the Amalgamated broke the strike by buying all the wretched houses and turning out the strikers, men, women and children. He omitted the blacklisting, the means by which the strikers were prevented from obtaining work elsewhere. He did not observe that the power which money gave Judge Weissman, himself and his mother, was as nothing compared to the power of the Amalgamated—a vast incalculable power founded upon gold and the possession of property. Nor did he say that the passing of the Mills had killed Mrs. Julis Harrison . . . a thing which was as true as truth. These things were to him of no importance. He was now simply "an average citizen" minding his own business.

All Willie said was, "When mother died, the old crowd went out of it for good."

In the drawing-room Ellen had been completely captured by the concerto. She was playing it all over again, from beginning to end, rapturously, savagely. Schneidermann lay among

the cushions of the divan, his lean figure sprawled languidly, his dark eyes closed.

"And what do you do now?" asked Lily. "You must do something to occupy yourself."

Willie's plump face brightened. "I have a farm," he said. "I raise ducks and chickens." A slow smile crept over Lily's face. "It's a success too," he continued. "You needn't laugh at it. I make it pay. Why, I made this trip on last year's profits. And I have a great deal of fun out of it." He smiled again with an air of supreme contentment. "It's the first time I've ever done what I wanted to do."

Lily regarded him with a faint air of surprise. It may have been that she guessed then for the first time, that he was not after all a complete fool. He, too, like Ellen, like herself, even like Irene, had escaped in spite of everything.

They had been talking thus for half an hour when Ellen, followed by Paul Schneidermann, joined them. Willie stood up nervously.

"Paul," said Lily, "Mr. Harrison—Mr. Harrison, Monsieur Schneidermann." They bowed. "You are both steel manufacturers," she added with a touch of irony, "You will find much in common."

Willie protested. "No longer," he said. "Now I am a farmer."

"And I," said Schneidermann, "have never been. I am a musician. . . ." Ellen laughed scornfully and he turned to her with a curious blushing look of self-effacement, "Perhaps," he said, "dilettante is a better word."

For a time they talked—the stupid, polite conversation that occurs between strangers; and then, the proprieties satisfied, Ellen and Paul drifted quickly back into the realm of music. Lily devoted herself to Willie Harrison.

"It was too bad," he remarked, "about the house at Cypress Hill."

Lily leaned forward on the table holding up one white wrist to shield her eyes from the light of the candles. "Yes," she said. "I'm sorry . . . sentimentally, I suppose. I should never have gone back to it. It was perfectly useless to me. But I'm sorry it's gone. I suppose it, too, was changed."

"You would never have known it," said Willie. "It was completely black . . . even the white trimmings." He leaned forward confidentially. "Do you know what they say? They say in the Town that some one was hired to burn it, so that you would be willing to sell."

For a moment Lily remained silent. Her hand trembled a little. She looked across at Ellen to see whether she had been listening. Her cousin was plainly absorbed in her argument.

"They can have it now," said Lily, with an intense bitterness. "I begrudge them even the taxes I have to pay on it. But they'll have to pay a good price," she added quietly. "I'll squeeze the last cent out of them."

It was the end of their conversation, for Willie glancing at his watch, announced that he must leave. Lily accompanied him up the long stairs to the unpretentious door. There he hesitated for a moment on bidding her good night.

"You have changed," he said. "I can see it now."

Lily smiled vaguely, "How?"

He fell to fumbling with the ruby clasp. "I don't know. More calm, I think. . . . You're not so impatient. And you're like a Frenchwoman. . . . Why, you even speak English with an accent."

"Oh, no, Willie . . . I'm not like a Frenchwoman. I'm still American. There's a good deal of my mother in me. I've realized it lately. It's that desire to run things. You understand what I mean. . . . Perhaps it's because I'm getting to the age where one can't live upon the food of youth." She laughed suddenly. "We Americans don't change. What I mean is that I'm growing old."

Willie shook hands politely and went out, leaving Lily in the doorway to watch his neat figure, silhouetted against the glow of light from the Café des Tourelles, until he reached the corner and disappeared.

It was the last time she ever saw him so it was impossible for her to have known the vagaries of his progress after he left the door of Numero Dix. Yet this progress held a certain interest. At the corner of the Rue Franklin, Willie hailed with his umbrella a passing taxicab and bade the driver take him to an address in the Rue du Bac. It was not the address

of the American Hotel; on the contrary it designated a three story house with a café on the first floor and lodgings above. In one of these lived a discreet lady who frequented the Louvre by day and employed Art as a means of making the acquaintance of quiet gentlemen hanging about the fringes of tourist parties. Indeed, she could have written an interesting compendium on the effect of art and Paris upon the behavior of soberly dressed, mousy gentlemen.

For Willie, with the death of his mother and the passing of the Mills, had begun to live . . . in his own awkward timid fashion, to be sure . . . but none the less he had begun to live.

As he sped on his way in the crazy taxicab, it became more and more evident that his mood was changed by the encounter with Lily. He sat well back in the cab, quietly, immersed in the thought. The dim white squares, empty and deserted now; the flamboyant houses of the section near the Étoile, the light-bordered Seine, the tall black skeleton of the Eiffel Tower . . . all these things now left him, for some strange reason, unmoved. They swept by the windows of the cab unnoticed. Willie was thinking of something else.

As the taxi turned into the ghostly spaces of the Place de la Concord, Willie stirred himself suddenly and thrust his head out of the window.

"Cocher! Cocher! Chauffeur!" he cried suddenly in atrocious French. "Allez a l'hotel Americain."

The mustachioed driver grunted, turned his cab, and sped away once more as if pursued by the devil; and presently he pulled up before the American Hotel, a respectable hostelry frequented by school teachers and temperance workers.

An hour later he lay chastely in his own bed, awake and restless in the dark, but still innocent. And in the Rue du Bac the sophisticated lady waited until long after midnight. At length, after cursing all Americans, she took her lamp from the window and went angrily to bed.

LXX

AT two o'clock in the house in the Rue Raynouard, Ellen came in to sit on the edge of her cousin's bed and discuss the happenings of the day.

"I guess," she observed, "Willie will be able to tell them a good story when he gets back to the Town. His mouth fairly hung open all the time when he was here."

Lily smiled. "I don't know," she replied, braiding her heavy bronze hair. "From what he tells me, he's in the backwater now. There are a lot of people there who have never heard of us. I suppose Willie and you and I are just back numbers so far as the Town is concerned."

After Ellen had gone to her own room, Lily settled herself on the chaise longue and, wrapped in a peignoir of pale blue chiffon all frothy with old lace the color of ivory, she took from her desk the enameled box, opened it and read the worn clippings. The pile had grown mightily. There were a score of new clippings. The headlines had increased in size and the editorials were an inch or two longer. The man was progressing. He was denounced with a steadily increasing hatred and bitterness. It was clear that he had become a national figure, that he was a leader in the battle against the roaring furnaces.

For a long time she lay with her eyes closed . . . thinking. And at last, hours after the rest of the house had grown still and dark, she sighed, replaced the clippings in the box and locked them once more into her desk. Then she settled herself to writing a letter over which she spent a long time, biting the end of the silver penholder from time to time with her firm white teeth. When at last the effort satisfied her, she placed it in an envelope and addressed it to Sister Monica in the Carmelite Convent at Lisieux. It was the hundredth letter she had written, letters in which she abased herself and begged forgiveness, letters to which there was never any reply save an

unforgiving and relentless silence. It was like dropping the pale gray envelopes into a bottomless crevasse.

In the following May, Ellen went to Munich. It was the first step in a grand tour of the German cities. She would visit Salzburg, Cologne, Vienna, Leipsic. She would call upon Schönberg, Busoni, Richard Strauss, Pfitzner, von Schilling. . . . If the spirit moved her, she might even penetrate Russia. And certainly she would go to the festival at Weimar. All this was included in the plan she set forth to Lily. There was no schedule. She would simply progress from one place to another as her fancy dictated. She knew no German but she would learn it, as she had learned French, by living among the people. She went alone. Therefore she would have to learn the language.

The expedition was singularly characteristic of all her life. When she found that the Town was unendurable she had reversed the plan of her pioneer ancestors and turned east instead of west, to seek a new world which to her was far more strange than the rolling prairies of the west had been to her great-grandfather. When the traveling salesman, whom she used as a stepping stone, fell by the wayside and departed this life she was free to go unhindered on her own roving way, fortified by the experience of a few years of married life. She owned no fixed home. On the contrary, she moved about restlessly . . . exploring, conquering, exhausting now this city, now that one. She was, it seemed, possessed of a veritable demon of restlessness, of energy, of a sharp inquiring intelligence. It was this quality, stimulated constantly by an overpowering curiosity, which sent her pioneering into the world of new music which Lily disliked so intensely. She explored those regions which musicians of a more contemplative and less restless nature dared not enter. It was as if she were possessed by a Gargantuan desire to devour all the world within a single lifetime.

Once in Paris she said to Lily, "You know, I am obsessed by a terrible sense of the shortness of life. It is impossible to know and experience all that I wish to know."

But this was as near as she came to a contemplative philosophy. She had no time for reflection. The hours she spent with the indolent Lily inevitably fired her with a fierce and

resentful unrest. It was then that she grew impatient, bad-tempered, unendurable. It was the descent of one of these black moods which drove her from the peaceful solitude of the house at Germigny upon a new voyage of exploration.

And so it happened that Lily and Madame Gigon were alone on the peaceful summer evening when Eustache, the red-cheeked farmer's boy, returning on his bicycle through the rain from Meaux, brought the final edition of the *Figaro* containing a short paragraph of the most enormous importance to all the world.

Madame Gigon had been installed days before on the first floor of the lodge, because she was no longer able to leave her bed and insisted upon being placed where her ears would serve her to the greatest advantage. The door of her room opened outward upon the terrace above the Marne and here, just inside the door, sat Lily when Eustache arrived.

She opened the *Figaro* and spread it across her knees.

Madame Gigon, hearing the rustle of the paper, stirred and said peevishly, "What is new to-day?"

"Not much of importance," said Lily, and after a pause. "The archduke of Austria has been assassinated. Shall I read you that?"

"Certainly," replied the old woman with a fierce impatience. "Certainly!"

It was only part of a daily game . . . this asking Madame Gigon what she would have read to her; because in the end the entire journal was read aloud by Lily—the daily progress of the celebrated case of Madame Caillaux, the signed articles by this or that politician, the news of the watering places . . . Deauville, Vichy, Aix, Biarritz, the accounts of the summer charity fêtes, the annual ball at the Opéra, the military news . . . everything was read to the old woman. For Madame Gigon found a keen delight in the recognition of a name among those who had been present at this fête or were stopping at that watering-place. After her own fashion, the blind old woman reduced all France to the proportions of a village. To her, the Caillaux trial became simply an old wives' tale, a village scandal.

So Lily read of the Archduke's assassination and Madame

Gigon listened, thoughtfully, interrupting her occasionally with a clucking sound to indicate how terrible the affair really was. She understood these things, being a Bonapartist. It was as if the Prince himself had been shot down. It was the natural result of the Republican movement, of Socialism, which was, after all, the same thing. Just another example of what these wild ideas might lead to.

"These are sad times," remarked Madame Gigon when Lily had finished reading. "There is no such thing as law and order . . . no such thing as respect and regard for rank. A wild confusion (*une mêlée sauvage*) to see who can gain the most wealth and make the greatest display. Money!" the old woman muttered. "That's it. Money! If you make a fortune out of chocolate or soap, that is enough to put you into the government. Good God! What times are ahead!"

To this harangue, Lily listened absently. It was all monotonously familiar to her. Madame Gigon had said it a thousand times. Every evil she attributed to "these dirty times." She concluded by saying, "Crazy Madame Blaise is right after all. There will be a war . . . She was right. . . . There will be."

While she was speaking, Lily tore open the only interesting letter among the dozen. Quietly she read it to herself. When she had finished she interrupted Madame Gigon.

"I have a letter from M. de Cyon," she said, "about some furniture I was selling. He writes that Madame is ill again with indigestion . . . quite seriously this time."

Madame Gigon made a little grunting noise. "Nadine eats too much . . . I have told her so a dozen times but she will not listen. A woman as fat as that . . ."

And from the superior pinnacle of her great age, Madame allowed the sentence to trail off into unspeakable vistas of Madame de Cyon's folly. At the end of a long time during which they both sat silently in the dripping quiet of the summer evening Madame Gigon said explosively, "She will go off suddenly one of these days . . . like that," and she snapped her finger weakly.

At the sound Crique and Michou got up lazily, stretched themselves, and waddled close to her chair. For a moment

she scratched their heads with groping fingers and then turning to Lily said, "It is time for their milk. . . . And see to it, my child, that they have a little cream in it."

Lily rose and called the dogs inside the lodge. Across the river in the tiny church, the old curé, M. Dupont, rang the vesper bell. Behind the cropped willows along the Marne the last glow faded above the rolling fields of wheat. Inside the house Lily was singing softly, "O, le cœur de ma mie est petit, tous p'tit, p'tit." There was no other sound.

Presently, Madame Gigon leaned back in her bed and called to Lily. "To-morrow," she said, "you might ask M. Dupont to call on me. It has been two days since he was here."

LXXI

UPON Germigny l'Evec, removed from the highroad and the railway, the war descended at first slowly, with the unreality of a vague dream, and then with a gathering, ponderous ferocity of an appalling nightmare. In the beginning even the farmer and his men, familiar with the army and with military service, could not believe it. Still there was the memory of 1870, said the pessimists. It was not impossible.

"Ah, but war is unthinkable," said Lily to Madame Gigon. "The days of war are over. It could not happen. They would not dare to permit it."

But Madame Gigon, again from the pinnacle of her superior age, replied, "My child. You have never seen a war. You know nothing of it. It is not at all impossible. You see, I can remember well 1870."

All the talk, it seemed, turned back at once to 1870. Sooner or later every one returned to it—M. Dupont, the curé, who had served at Metz with MacMahon, the farmer and his wife, even Eustache. 1870 was no longer a half-century away. It became only yesterday, an event which was just finished the evening before at sunset. And slowly it became clear that war was not at all an impossibility. The order for mobilization made it a reality so hideous, so monstrous, as to be utterly lacking in reality. In the château and at the farm, there were no longer any barriers. The cook and the farmer's wife, came and sat on the terrace, red-faced and weeping. In the quiet of the evening there drifted across the wheatfields the ominous whistling of trains which followed no schedule, and from the distant high-road the faint sound of an unceasing procession of taxicabs and omnibuses rushing east and north through Pantin, through Meaux, on to La Ferté-sous-Jouarre.

From Paris came three letters, two by messenger, an orderly

of the Baron, the other by post. One was from the Baron himself and one was from M. de Cyon.

"It is all more grave than any of us suspect," wrote the Baron. "Unhappily, Dear Lily, it is impossible for me to see you. I cannot leave my regiment. You cannot come to Vincennes. We must try to endure all this in the fashion of philosophers. It is not, you understand, as if it had been unexpected. It has been slow—more slow than any one hoped—in arriving.

"As for what may come of it, to me or to Jean. What is there to do? We are all helpless as if caught in a web. May God be with us all! Jean will be with me. Your heart can be assured that I shall do all it is possible to do for him. The rest remains with the good God. I would give . . . What would I give? Ten years or more of my life to have seen you before going away. But that, it seems, is impossible. So we must wait until it is possible.

"We are leaving to-night. I have sent old Pierre to see to it that you and Madame Gigon are brought safely back to Paris. Germigny is safe from the Germans, but there is always a chance. Who can say what will happen? Good God! The suddenness of it!

"Au revoir, dear Lily, in haste. A thousand kisses from thy Césaire."

It was the first time that there had been in all their correspondence even the faintest note of anything more compromising than a proper friendship between the Baron and the woman who had made his old cousin, Madame Gigon, comfortable for life. It was this which somehow gave the letter a gravity more terrible than any hint of foreboding contained in its crisp white pages. It was as if the barriers of convention had suddenly been destroyed, as if they had gone down in ruin to reveal life in all the primitive directness of unfettered nature. It seemed to say, "Nothing matters any longer save those things which have to do with life, death and love."

The letter from M. de Cyon was more calm and dignified, the proper letter of a diplomat. It was the letter of a distinguished, white-haired gentleman.

"You must leave Germigny as soon as it is possible. I write

you this in confidence and beg you not to arouse a panic among the peasants and the citizens of Meaux. It is war, Madame, and no one can say what will happen. Your security is of the deepest concern to me. I beg you to waste no time. Go on foot, by ox-cart, by train—however it is possible, but go. A battle is no place for so beautiful a woman."

That was all, yet it contained hints and innuendoes of things too terrible for the imagination. M. de Cyon undoubtedly knew more than he chose to reveal in his circumspect note. He was, to be sure, near to the Ministry of War.

There was a letter too from Jean, breathless and full of spirit, the letter of a young warrior eager for battle, forgetful of all else, of God, of his mother, of everything save the prospect of fighting.

"Dear Mama," he wrote, "we are leaving to-night for the front. I shall return perhaps a captain. Think of it! Thy Jean a captain! Do not worry. Our troops are in excellent condition. I fancy the war will be over in a fortnight. I am in Césaire's company. I think of you, of course.

"THY JEAN."

With the three letters in her hand Lily left Madame Gigon and set out to walk the white tow-path at the edge of the river. On the far side the farm appeared deserted as if suddenly its occupants had been overcome by a sleep of enchantment. The oxen were nowhere to be seen. The fowls were gone. The house lay shuttered and empty as a house of the dead. Above the tow-path, the château likewise stood silent and empty. In all the landscape there was no sign of life, no dogs, no chickens, no crying children. And as she walked she turned her head presently and saw, leaving the far side of the farm, a lumbering two-wheeled cart piled high with furniture,—mattresses, a sewing machine, a few chairs, and swinging underneath, little cages of osier in which were crowded the barnyard fowls. Tied to the wheels, three goats followed the gentle motion of the cart. Fat Madame Borgue, the farmer's wife, trudged by the side guiding the slow-gaited oxen with a long wand, and high up, perched on a truss of straw, sat her

mother, an immensely old and wrinkled woman, with Madame Borgue's baby in her arms. They were deserting, driven before the straggling columns of refugees which had appeared like magic during the early morning along the high-roads from La Ferté to Meaux. There could be no doubt. The farm and the château were empty. At Germigny only Lily and Madame Gigon remained behind.

LXXII

IT appeared that the discovery made no impression upon Lily, for she continued on her way along the deserted river path without stopping, without even checking the mad speed at which she walked. Her manner was that of one fleeing before a terror from which there is no escape. When she had reached a spot opposite the little island that divided the waters of the river, she halted suddenly by a clump of hazel bushes and flung herself down upon the thick grass in the shadow of the plane trees. She began to weep, soundlessly with long, racking, silent sobs which shook her whole body as if she had been stricken by some frightful pain.

Far off a train whistled distantly. The bright red kepis of the soldiers showed in rows like poppies at the windows of the coaches. On the white solid bridge at Trilport there appeared a double procession; one column hot, dusty, bedraggled, full of crying, exhausted, women and children, moved toward Paris. The other was gay and bright. The men wore bright red trousers and bright red caps. It moved briskly forward. The guns were like a field of wheat come suddenly to life, moving gallantly to throw itself upon the reaper.

After a time, Lily sat up, her hair all blown and disheveled, her dark eyes bright from weeping. She read the letters over and over absorbing the same phrases . . . May God be with us all! . . . It is all more grave than any of us suspect . . . A thousand kisses from thy Césaire . . . It is war, Madame, and no one can say what will happen . . . A battle is no place for a beautiful woman . . . Perhaps I shall return . . . Perhaps I shall return a captain . . . Think of it! Thy Jean a captain! . . . Thy Jean! . . . Thy Jean . . . Thy Césaire! . . . Thy Jean! Thy precious Jean!

Slowly she refolded the letters and thrust them into the bosom of her dress and then, as if her emotion were too strong

for silence, she said aloud. . . . "Me . . . myself . . . Why do they worry about me? . . . Do they think that I am afraid?" She laughed suddenly. "Afraid of what?"

Besides it was impossible to flee with a sick old woman and no means of conveyance. She laughed again and said bitterly, "What do they think . . . that I am a magician?"

Lying there in the deep grass, it must have occurred to her all at once that her whole life had been pillaged and destroyed because an Austrian archduke was shot in a little hole called Serajevo. Madame Gigon dying. Césaire and Jean on their way to destruction. Who remained? What remained? De Cyon, perhaps. No one else. No one in all the world. The years of her life come to an end like this . . . that everything she loved, everything she cherished, might be swept away overnight like so much rubbish into a dustbin. As if she were no more than a poor forsaken flower vender or charwoman! What was money now? What were beautiful things? What was all her life?

And she flung herself down once more, sobbing wildly as she had sobbed another time in the old house at Cypress Hill, when all at once, she had sensed the tragedy of a whole lifetime, as if she stood in a vast plain surrounded only by loneliness.

At dusk she arose slowly and, from long habit put her hair in order, smoothed her dress, and set out upon her homeward journey, walking slowly, with feet from which all youth had gone. When she arrived at the lodge, the traces of her weeping had disappeared and she entered proudly and in silence. For a moment there came into her pale lovely face a fleeting likeness to her mother, a certain determination that was inseparable from the rugged countenance of the stoic Julia Shane.

The house was still because old Madame Gigon had slipped out of her bed and was lying asleep on the floor. When Lily attempted to rouse the old woman, she discovered that she was not sleeping at all but unconscious, and suddenly Lily too slipped to the floor, buried her face in her hands and wept noisily and without restraint. The sound of her sobbing penetrated the breathless garden and the distant empty rooms of the château, but there was no one to answer it. The only sound was the triumphant, ironic whistle of a steel locomotive,

its belly hot with red flames, its nostrils breathing fire and smoke.

At last she lifted Madame Gigon into the bed by the window and, lying by the side of the unconscious old woman, she fell into a profound sleep.

LXXIII

IT was dark when she awoke and rose wearily to light a lamp. The first flame of the match illuminated the room. It revealed all the familiar furniture . . . the chintz covered chairs, the bright curtains of *toile de Jouy*, the bowl of ghostly white phloxes by the window. Everything was the same save that Madame Gigon . . . old Tante Louise . . . lay unconscious upon the bed, and the house was so still that the silence was suffocating.

She went into the kitchen and prepared a mixture of egg, milk and brandy which she fed the old woman through a tube. She understood the care of Madame Gigon. The old woman had been like this before. Lily, herself, ate nothing, but took from the cupboard by the window a bottle of port and drank a brimming glass. And after a time she went outside to listen to the silence.

With her black cloak wrapped about her she sat there for a long time. The farm, the tiny inn, the houses of the village were black and silent. There hung in the atmosphere the ghostly feeling of a house suddenly deserted by its inhabitants, standing empty and alone. The mournfulness was overwhelming. After a time she lighted a cigarette and smoked it, holding the ember away from her and regarding it at a little distance as if the faint light in some way dissipated the loneliness.

For a time she regarded the distant horizon and the queer flashes of color like heat lightning which appeared at intervals. Sometimes the rising night wind bore toward her a faint sound like that of distant thunder. And then all at once, there appeared in the house by the village church a bright light. It was a lamp placed close to the open window so that the rays piercing the darkness traversed the river, penetrated the low branches of the plane trees and enveloped Lily herself in a faint glow.

She watched it for a time with a breathless curiosity. The

cigarette, untouched, burned low and dropped from her fingers, and then behind the light appeared the figure of the curé in his rusty black clothes. He had stayed behind to guard his church. He was there, moving about his little house, as if nothing had happened. Presently he took down from a shelf above the table a heavy book, laid it before him, took out his steel rimmed spectacles, and began to read.

After an hour of silence during which she lay motionless in her chair, Lily rose and went inside to look at Madame Gigon. The old woman lay on her back, snoring peacefully. She felt her pulse. It was weak and irregular. Then she brought more brandy and milk, fed it to Madame Gigon, and wrapping the black cloak about herself, set off down the terrace to the iron bridge that led across the Marne to the house of the curé.

Away to the north the flashes in the sky became more frequent and the distant thunder less broken and more distinct. On the way to the bridge the alder branches stirring softly in the breeze, whispered together in a vague, ghostly fashion. She walked slowly in the same tired fashion until she reached the little white house by the church.

LXXIV

INSIDE, the old priest at the sound of her knock looked up from his reading and took off his spectacles.

"Come in," he said, and Lily stepped uncertainly through the door, her eyes blinded by the bright flame of the petrol light. M. Dupont, regarding her with an expression of amazement, rose from his chair.

"It is I, Madame Shane," said Lily. "The friend of Madame Gigon."

"Ah, yes, I remember you well."

Before this night there had passed between them occasional greetings when he came to the lodge to play piquet with Madame Gigon, when he passed Lily riding through the wood in the early morning.

"Won't you sit down?" and then, "Why are you here? You know the Germans may come any time now. Surely before morning."

"As soon as that?" asked Lily indifferently. She had not thought of the Germans. Perhaps they would come. It did not matter greatly.

The old man bent his head over the table and began to turn the pages of the book. "Our soldiers are brave, Madame," he said. "But there is too much against them. They were not ready. In the end we will win. . . . For the present . . ." He finished with a gesture implying that the matter lay in the hands of the good God. He was a simple man, a peasant trained for the priesthood by devout and adoring parents.

"It would be better if you would go away," he said after a sudden pause. "I imagine it will not be pleasant."

Lily laughed softly. For a moment something of her old gay indifference appeared to return, even a shade of the spirit with which she had met another adventure years before in the park at Cypress Hill.

"There is Madame Gigon," she said. M. Dupont again bent over the table silently. It was a gesture of assent, of resignation, of agreement.

"Besides," continued Lily, "I am not afraid. I think I may even enjoy the experience. . . . I should like to know what war is like." And then, as if she feared that he did not understand her, she added, "Not, of course, because I like war. Oh! not at all! But you understand what it means for the men. . . . I have men in it." She shivered a little and drew the black cape more closely about her. "I think it might be easier for the women if they could go into battle as well. It would be easier than waiting . . . at home . . . alone."

The man closed his book. "Madame is a beautiful woman," he said, softly.

Again Lily smiled faintly. "Oh, I understand what you mean . . . perfectly." A thoughtful expression entered her dark eyes. She seemed suddenly to be listening to the faint and distant thunder. "Yes," she said with a sigh, "I understand. Fortunately I have no temptation to run away. I could not go if I chose. Madame Gigon, you understand, has given up her life to me. . . . It would be impossible to desert her now."

She sat now with her back to the whitewashed wall of the little room; her black cape and her red hair carried the quality of a beautiful painting. All the color was gone from her face and beneath her eyes hung dark circles which somehow increased the brilliance of her eyes and the whiteness of her skin. She looked old but it was the oldness of beauty, possessing a clear refinement and delicacy.

"She is a good woman . . . Madame Gigon," said the priest.

M. Dupont spoke in a low voice, respectful, scarcely audible, but the words exerted upon his visitor an extraordinary effect. All at once she leaned forward resting her elbows on the table. The cloak slipped to the floor. She began to talk passionately with a kind of fierce melancholy in her voice.

"Ah, she is a good woman," she said. "She has given her life to me. She has lived with me for twenty years. She has been everything to me. You understand . . . a friend . . . a companion . . . even a mother."

And then, without warning, she poured out the whole story of her life, incident by incident, chapter by chapter, reserving nothing, disguising nothing. Before the eyes of the astonished old priest she recreated the house at Cypress Hill, the Mills, the Town, the figures of her bizarre father, her cynical mother, the hysterical Irene, all the kaleidoscopic picture of a wandering, aimless life. She told him of Jean. She even related bit by bit the long tale of her love for the Baron. She told him that in her heart she had even sinned for the sake of a common laborer . . . Krylenko.

"And yet," she said, "he was not exactly that. He was a great deal more. He was, you understand, something of a martyr. He gave up everything for his people. He would have given his life had it been necessary. . . . It hurts me, even now, to think of him. He was a powerful man . . . a good man . . . a noble man."

It was of him that she talked for a long time, wildly, passionately invoking him in her enthusiasm before the stricken eyes of the old priest. He stood there for a long time in the bare, whitewashed room, powerful, austere, suffering, as he had been on the night of the slaughter in the park at Cypress Hill.

"He was a good man. . . . He still is," she said. She talked breathlessly with a bright exalted light in her eyes. "I have never told this to any one. . . . There was no sin between us . . . nothing unless to love deeply is a sin."

As if turned to stone, M. Dupont sat listening quietly. Only once did he speak and that was when she mentioned the Baron. Then he stirred uneasily and peered at her closely as if he suspected her of lying.

"Incredible!" he murmured to himself. "Incredible!" And after a little pause. "Only God can know what lies in the darkness of men's hearts. Only God. . . . It is impossible to know. . . . It is impossible to know!"

But Lily swept past the interruption. The torrent of her revelations flowed on. She talked eagerly, with a kind of wild delight; yet what she said lacked the quality of a confession. She seemed to have no profound consciousness of sin. She was even unrepentant. She told the story breathlessly with a kind of wonder at herself, at the tragedy of her own soul, that she

loved so easily. Instead of confessing, she appeared to be pouring out to the trembling old man secrets, too long confined, which she found herself driven to reveal.

At last she drew to a conclusion. "You understand now," she said, "why to me the war is inexpressibly tragic. You understand what Madame Gigon has been to me."

She picked up the fallen cloak and, shivering, wrapped it about her and sank back in the stiff little chair with a weary air of finality and resignation. "You see, it is not only the war . . . Madame Gigon is dying. The war has taken everything. You understand I shall be alone . . . completely alone."

M. Dupont made no reply. He kept his head bowed. He was repeating a prayer as Irene had done in the old days. They prayed for Lily, who had not been inside a church in more than seven years.

"I came to fetch you to her," continued Lily, "She is dying now. . . . I am certain she cannot live much longer."

When the priest at last raised his head, it was to say, "Come. If she is dying we must waste no time," in so gentle a voice that the tears welled in Lily's eyes. She took out her handkerchief, already wet.

"I thought," she said, "that I was through with weeping. I must have a great many tears." (Lily who never wept.)

LXXV

MDUPONT, after collecting those things which are necessary in the administration of the last rites, put on his shovel hat and took up a lantern.

"Come," he said, "we must hurry." And together they set out along the white road, between the whispering alders and over the iron bridge. The lantern swung feebly in his grasp. They walked in complete silence until they reached the terrace when Lily, looking up suddenly, saw that the sky behind the lodge was filled with a cloudy whiteness as if gray smoke were drifting across the sky.

"There is a fire somewhere," she said placing a hand on the arm of her companion.

M. Dupont halted and regarded the sky for a moment, holding his lantern high so that the rays might penetrate the darkness beyond the vine covered lodge.

"It is not smoke," he said suddenly. "It is dust. The cavalry is passing along the road."

And then for the first time the small revealing noises reached Lily's ear . . . the clanking of spurs, the creaking of girths, the muffled sound of hoofs striking the white road, and then the solitary whicker of a horse.

LXXVI

INSIDE the lodge; Lily left Madame Gigon to the curé. He assured her that she was right. It was impossible for the old woman to live much longer. It would have been useless to have secured a physician even if one had been available.

"She has been dying a long while," said the old man. "I fancy she would prefer not to be hindered in her going."

As Lily closed the door upon the two old friends, she saw M. Dupont kneel down in the lamplight and begin to pray.

Wearily she climbed the narrow winding stairway which led to the upper floor and, finding herself unable to sleep, she went to the window above the gateway and sat down to watch the column of cavalry on its way into battle. The men had been riding for hours and now they rode silently, white with dust, the black plumes of horsehair swaying as the horses moved. It was impossible to distinguish one from another. They were simply black figures, units of a body, mysterious and without personality. There was not even the sound of a voice, nothing but the faint rattle of sabers and the ghostly breathing of the horses. Jean might have been among them . . . even Césaire himself. It was impossible to say. They were each like the other, no longer individuals, now only units, cogs in a vast machine. No one of them counted any longer for anything.

Presently the column came to an end and a battery of artillery, caissons rattling, men upright upon the cartridge boxes, followed in its place. And at last it too passed, swallowed up by the questioning darkness. The silence became unreal, terrifying. From below stairs arose the droning sound of M. Dupont's voice conducting the service that would lead Madame Gigon safely into the world beyond . . . the world beyond. To-night in all the lonely breathless quiet, the world beyond was very near. One might almost enter it simply by closing one's eyes, by stepping through a doorway into the night.

Lily sat motionless and upright, watching. A second column passed and then a third; and at last, a man riding a black horse whose chest was white with froth turned in at the gateway. He was a man like the others . . . a unit, a being without individuality save that he rode alone a little in the rear of the other horsemen. Under the archway he dismounted from his horse, and in the next moment he performed an act which at once restored to him his identity. He walked directly to the iron ring which hung concealed among the ivy leaves and there fastened the black horse. Thus he betrayed himself. Only one person could have known the exact place where the ring lay hidden among the leaves. There could be no longer any doubt.

When he had fastened the black horse, he stepped out a little way from the house and called softly, "Lily . . . Lily."

LXXVII

THERE was no answer, but before he called again a tall figure in a black cloak ran from the doorway and hurried toward him.

"Césaire! . . . Césaire!" were the only words she spoke. She clung against him, the metal of his bright cuirass pressing her lovely, soft body. For a time Césaire kissed her passionately and at length, without a word, she led him away from the house to the pleached walk that led from the château garden down to the river. They walked sadly with arms encircling each other's waists.

"I have but a moment," said the Baron. "At most, ten minutes. I have no right even to that."

She told him that Madame Gigon was dying. She explained that old Pierre had not appeared to help them to escape and that he would have been of no use since it was impossible to move her companion. And when she had wasted three precious minutes in these explanations, she said, "You need not worry for me . . . I shall be quite safe. . . . If only I could be as certain of you."

At this he laughed softly, reassuring her and pulling his fierce mustachios in warlike fashion.

"You need not fear for me," he said. "I have had such great luck . . . always." And he looked at her closely with shining eyes.

Then they sat for a time in silence, clinging closely to each other. Presently he took off his helmet and rested it in her lap allowing her to twist her fingers in and out among the long black hair of the plume.

"And Jean," she said, after a time. "He is with you?"

"He is with me. He passed with the others beneath your window. He sent you his love. He would have come too, but he knew it was unsoldierly to break the ranks. . . . He is a good

soldier," he added softly. "A valiant fellow. With me it is different. I am an old fellow. I have learned that there are times when one must break the ranks. There are times when even breaking ranks does not matter."

In the darkness Lily's eyes closed as if she felt a sharp, sudden pain. "Ellen advised me," she said, "never to be too fond of my child."

Her lover kissed her and answered, "Come, you must not think of it like that. You must understand he is a boy . . . an ardent boy."

And then he fell again to talking of her danger. He urged her not to remain.

"I have the curé here . . . M. Dupont," she said.

"Leave him with Madame Gigon."

"No. That I will not do. . . . Besides the Germans may never arrive here after all."

"No," he said, gravely. "Perhaps not. We shall try to prevent them."

Then they walked back again to the gateway. The house was silent now and the voice of M. Dupont no longer to be heard. The Baron replaced his helmet, untied his horse and swung himself on the back of the animal. Leaning down, he kissed her again and then turned through the gateway into the road. She listened to the sound of the black horse's hoofs as he galloped past the moving columns, and at last when the echo was no longer audible she reentered the house and flung herself down upon the bed. Throughout the brief visit, she had restrained herself. Now she wept quietly, almost in peace, as if she were enveloped already by a great resignation.

LXXVIII

MADAME GIGON lived through the night, sleeping peacefully in her high bed near the door that opened upon the terrace. But Lily did not sleep at all. She kept watch, sometimes sitting at the bedside, sometimes lying wrapped in her cloak in the long chair beneath the plane trees. She watched the flashes on the horizon beyond the wood, until the dawn rising slowly absorbed them and rendered them invisible in a faint glow which grew and grew until it enveloped all the dome of the sky and transformed, suddenly and without warning, the dark wood from a low black wall extending across the sky into a grove of slender trunks silhouetted against the rising light.

At dawn the troops no longer passed the house. The dusty white road lay deserted between the rows of chestnut trees. But in the dust were the prints of a thousand hoofs and the tracks of the wide wheeled caissons. The little procession on the distant bridge at Trilport had vanished. There were no soldiers going forward; and coming back, there was now only an occasional, straggling cart or the figure of a shopkeeper pushing before him in a wooden wheelbarrow all that he had salvaged of his little shop.

At noon there appeared out of the wood a rolling kitchen drawn by tired horses and driven by weary soldiers all white with dust. It came nearer and nearer until it arrived at the farm where, in the shadow of the big gray barns, it halted and the men ate. A little while later soldiers began to appear among the trees, tiny figures in red trousers and red caps, no longer bright like the poppies, but all stained and dust covered. The red marked them against the wall of greenery as if it had been planned that they should serve as targets.

Singly and in little groups of two or three the soldiers straggled across the fields toward the kitchen set up against the

gray wall of the barn. The sun shone brilliantly, and in the clear white light the red tiles, the white walls, and the green of the trees appeared gay and bright. Some of the men carried arms suspended in slings. One or two wore about their close-cropped heads bandages that were stained, with spots of red as if the color had come loose from their tragic little caps and stained their skins. There was one dandified young officer, with fine waxed mustaches, who dragged a shattered leg and still wore the bedraggled remnants of the spotless white gloves he had carried into the battle.

When they had eaten and drunk, the soldiers made their way across the iron bridge and turning along the tow path at the foot of the garden kept on their way, moving in a thin, trickling stream in the direction of Paris.

At length Lily, rousing herself, went to the foot of the garden, opened the gate and stood on the path. She carried wine which she gave them to drink as they passed.

"And how does it go?" she asked now and then.

The respectful answer was always the same. "Badly, Madame. . . . Badly. It would be better if you did not remain."

Or a shrug and "What can we do, Madame? They have better guns . . . better shells. One cannot see them. They are dressed so that they look like the trees themselves. And we . . . we." A gesture indicating the fatal red trousers and kepi.

Early in the afternoon the sound of the guns became audible again, not distant this time and indistinct like thunder, but sharp and clear . . . the barking "ping" of the seventy-fives.

When the wine was all gone, Lily returned again to the terrace to wait. She had not been sitting there long when there arose all at once the sound of a terrific explosion. Turning her head she saw above the river at Trilport a great cloud of white dust and black smoke. They had destroyed the solid white bridge. It was the French themselves who had destroyed it. The Germans must be very near.

Madame Gigon slept peacefully just inside the doorway, all undisturbed by the explosion.

As for Lily, lying in the low chaiz, the explosion appeared to

have worked a miracle. The color had begun to return to her white face. It showed itself in bright spots as if she had been seized by a fever. And presently she arose and began to walk about, up and down the garden, going at last into the château itself from which she returned in a little while carrying a pair of the Baron's binoculars. With these she climbed to the little turret which rose above the vine covered dove-cote. There she settled herself to watching.

In a little while the men about the kitchen gathered themselves into a group, put the horses once more into the harness and drove away, carrying with them a boy of the last class whose strength had given out. M. Dupont followed them until he reached the edge of the iron bridge where he halted and stood looking after them, his hands shading his old eyes against the long rays of the setting sun, until they disappeared around a turn of the river. Then he went quietly indoors.

A little while later a battery of guns appeared among the trees, halted on the edge of the wood, and began firing in the direction of La Ferté where a cloud of smoke from the burning houses hung low upon the horizon. It was a pretty picture. The men worked the guns rapidly. The cannon spat forth little curls of white smoke followed by sudden angry barks, not in the least deafening. In the clear evening light it was all like one of Meissonier's battle pictures, rather clear and pretty and bright-colored.

But in a little while the battery stopped firing, the horses leaned forward once more into the harness and the guns drew away down the lane, past the white farm and across the iron bridge. The planks reverberated with a thunderous sound under the hoofs of the galloping horses. The little cavalcade turned along the tow-path and vanished. Out of the wood there appeared suddenly three gray-green figures on horseback who halted and surveyed the landscape. They were the first of the Uhlans.

LXXIX

WITH the falling of night, the Germans were in possession of the château and the gardens. In bands of twenty or thirty they pushed beyond across the field and through the copses in the direction of Meaux. A few remained behind, and these occupied the château, using the best linen of the Baroness, taking down from the wall of the kitchen the cook's great battery of spotless copper kettles in which to cook their beans and soup.

Lily, sitting quietly inside the darkened lodge by the side of Madame Gigon, heard their shouts and the stamping of their horses in the stables. Dark figures moved above among the trees of the garden, the figures of her enemies, the men who would kill if it were possible Césaire and Jean. In the excitement, no one ventured as far from the château as the lodge, and for a time she remained safe and in peace.

The cannon were no longer to be heard. For a little while there arose the distant crackling of rifles like the sound of brush fires made by the foresters in August; but this too died away after a time.

She bathed her head, fed Madame Gigon once more and sat down again to wait, and at last, overcome by exhaustion she sank quietly into sleep.

In the château the weary Germans slept and in the stables the horses ceased their stamping. A deep unbroken stillness settled again over the garden and the wheatfields beyond, so peaceful that the firing and the shouting of a little while before might have been wholly an illusion, a nightmare which had nothing to do with reality.

Thus passed three hours.

It was the sound of knocking which aroused Lily, a violent imperious sort of knocking which wakened her sharply and brought her quickly to her feet. As if by force of habit, she

opened the door and said in French, "Gently . . . please. . . . Gently. It is not necessary to break down the door. There is a sick woman here."

As it swung open she was enveloped by the sudden bright glare of an electric torch. At the same moment a voice speaking the most excellent French said, "I am sorry, Madame. I ask your pardon. I did not know the lodge was occupied."

The voice was not gruff. It was rather cold and smooth and carried a hint of weariness. "I found the door locked. I always knock upon locked doors," continued the voice. "May I come in?"

All this time Lily, blinded by the sudden light, stood leaning against the door, emerging slowly from the effects of her deep slumber. For a moment she was silent.

"I prefer to come outside," she replied. "There is a sick woman here. . . . If you will turn your light inside, you will see that I am not lying. She is there."

The light flashed across the high bed of Madame Gigon. "I believe you, Madame."

Lily closed the door and stood leaning against it. From the one of the lower windows of the château streamed a path of light which illuminated faintly the terrace, the front of the lodge and the Uhlan officer. He was not tall and was not in the least savage in appearance. On the contrary his face was smooth shaven and narrow, rather the face of a scholar than a soldier. Yet he carried himself very erect. There was something about him that was cold, stiff, almost brittle.

"What do you want of me?" asked Lily in a voice expressionless and free of all emotion.

For a moment her companion hesitated. He switched off the electric torch which until now he had kept turned full upon her. "Were you sleeping?" he asked.

"Yes." Again in the same dead tone.

"Extraordinary. You must be a woman of great nerve."

"No . . . not at all. I had not slept in thirty-six hours."

Again he hesitated. "I . . . I have been riding for that length of time . . . and still I cannot sleep. I have tried. . . . My nerves are too much on edge."

She waited silently.

"Tell me . . . why did you remain behind?" he began presently.

She made a gesture indicating the window behind which lay Madame Gigon. "You have seen the reason," she said. "It was impossible to go away."

The man whistled softly. "Aren't you in the least afraid?"

For a time there was no sound except a deep sigh. "There was nothing to be done," she answered presently in the same dead voice. "When there is nothing to be done, it is foolish to fret. It is best to make the most of it. What would you have me do?" For a moment a trace of life, almost of humor entered her voice. "Would you have me lie down and scream?" Again she sighed. "What good would it do? What would come of it? I do not believe in scenes."

The Uhlan laughed. "Unlike most women," he said. "But you are right. Afterwards, scenes are ridiculous. Nothing really matters much. . . . I've learned that in two days," he added with a sort of pride.

To this she made no reply but her very silence carried its own gesture of assent. She did not deny his statement.

"I suppose you hate me," he began, "like a good Frenchwoman."

For the first time she raised her head and looked squarely at the stranger. "What do you want?" she asked. "Why are you talking in this fashion? You understand I am helpless. I must talk with you if you choose." In the darkness she frowned. "I suppose that is war." And then, "Besides, I am not a Frenchwoman at all. I am an American."

At this the stranger gave a sudden start, in the darkness more audible than visible by the sudden click of metal on some part of his uniform.

"Then you must hate me even more. . . . I have lived in Paris. The Americans there are more French than the French."

This remark, it appeared, angered her for she answered quickly. "I know no Americans in Paris. I know nothing about them."

The Uhlan laughed. "Madame, I have no intention of injuring you . . . in any way."

To this she replied, "I suppose you do not mind if I sit down. I am a little weary."

The stranger's manner changed abruptly. He became courteous, almost courtly.

"I am sorry. I did not know there were chairs. You see I am a stranger here. Sit down if you prefer it, by all means. . . . I am not one to work hardships for a woman." She moved toward the long chair under the lindens and lay down, wrapping the cloak about her and closing her eyes.

"Perhaps," said the stranger, "you would prefer to sleep."

"No," she replied quietly, "I could not sleep now." And as if the idea amused her she added, "I might as well talk with you . . . since you too suffer from insomnia."

"As you will . . . if you do not hate me too much."

He sat in the chair by her side and slipped from his waist the belt in which hung his black lugar pistol. Thus they remained for some time, silently and peacefully, as if they were old friends between whom there was no necessity for speech. The German sat with his elbows resting on his knees, his head buried in his hands. There was a smoothness and angularity about his thin figure so trimly clad in a uniform that now carried the stains of battle.

At last he took out a cigarette and said, "I suppose you smoke, Madame?"

To which Lily replied without opening her eyes, "No."

He was so polite, so scrupulously polite. And presently he sighed, "Ah, this civilization . . . this world of monkeys. (*Monde de singes.*)" And once more the night stillness descended, for Lily made no effort at speech now. She lay motionless, so still that she might have been dead. Her silence appeared to reproach him for he turned suddenly and said, "Do you fancy I like this . . . this living like a burglar in a château . . . your château?"

"It is not mine," Lily murmured.

"Do you fancy I like this war. . . . I am not pleased with killing men. Why should I? I do not hate them. How is it possible? How can you even hate me?"

She stirred impatiently. "No. It is impossible to hate genuinely . . . without a reason one can put one's finger

on. All the same you are my enemy," she added stubbornly. The Uhlan laughed. "Who has made me so, Madame? Not myself, surely." And then after a little pause, he added with a kind of desperation, "No, I am like all the others. I have nothing to do with it. We are all caught, Madame, . . . hopelessly caught in one great web spun by a monster. Ah, what a monster!"

In the distant stable arose suddenly the sound of two horses quarreling. There was a violent kicking . . . a squealing that was savage and implacable.

"We are not even like that," he said. "It is not even that we bite and kick. . . . We shoot each other at a distance. You, Madame, perhaps have friends among the men I am fighting. I kill them and they me only because the first who shoots is the safest. You know the artillerymen kill men they never even see." He spat suddenly. "Bah! It is mechanics . . . all mechanics . . . machinery, you understand, which they make in great roaring factories. They kill men in factories in order to kill more men on the battlefield. What is there in that?"

Again she made no answer to his question. The quarreling horses had been separated and their squealing silenced. There was only the overpowering stillness once more, a stillness unearthly in quality which lifted all that it enveloped upon a new plane, determined by new values. Life, death, reality, dreams—all these things were confused and yet amazingly clear, as if the whole had been pierced by a single beam of cold white light.

LXXX

IT must have occurred to Lily that the man was talking in an hysterical fashion with all the frenzy of a neurasthenic. "Madame, you should see one of our towns where there are great furnaces . . . Essen, Madame, or Saarbrucken . . . black, incredibly vile, a wallow of roaring fire and white hot steel . . . I know them, Madame, I have lived in them."

Then for the first time Lily stirred. She even laughed, faintly yet with unmistakable bitterness. "Know them? I know them. We have them in America."

The stranger paid no heed to her interruption. "Look, Madame," he commanded, pointing to the north where the horizon was lighted by the glow of a burning town. "Look, Madame. You see that fire in the sky. The ladles have overflowed. The white hot steel has spread across Europe. There is gold in it too . . . red hot gold. . . . Melted Gods . . . idols which we worship to-day."

His voice rose until he was shouting. When he finished, he leaned back in his chair, the fine uniform suddenly crumpled and limp. And after a time he began to speak again, softly as if the torrent of emotion had exhausted him.

"And where have we to go? If we sought to escape where have we to go? There is no place. Because the monkeys . . . the fools have civilized all the world, so that they might sell their cheap cotton and tin trays. They have created a monster which is destroying them. There is no longer any peace . . . any solitude. They have even wrenched the peasant from his plow . . . the shepherd from his hillside." Again he pointed toward the burning horizon. "They have driven them out upon the plains where the cauldrons have overflowed across all Europe. It is the monsters, Madame, who are at the bottom of all this. Ah, commerce, industry, wealth, power." He tossed away his cigarette and lighted another. "When this is over,

who do you think will have gained? Not the peasant, Madame. Not the shepherd, not the poet. Ah, no! They will be shoveled under the earth . . . whole bodies and pieces of bodies because they are no longer of any use. Not the worker, Madame, whom the monster devours. Ah, no." His voice rose suddenly. "It is the monster who will have gained . . . the monster and the men whose pockets he fills with gold . . . the monster of material, of industry. He will destroy us. He will devour us. What can we do? You see, I know. I have lived in France. I have lived in England. . . . My grandmother, you understand, was English. I would prefer to live in England. But No! I was in England three weeks ago. And suddenly I must go home to join my regiment, to set out upon the expedition that has brought me here into this trampled garden. What for? Who can say? Why? Who knows? Not surely because it gives me pleasure. Not surely because I care a fig whether the German empire lives or dies. That is merely an excuse to drag us into battle." His head dropped wearily again. "You see, this is why I have not been able to sleep. I have been thinking of these things. They are not the sort that lull a man to sleep. There is blood on my hands. I killed to-day . . . by shooting and stabbing. I assure you it gave me no pleasure. I should doubtless have loved the men I killed. I am helpless. I cannot fight against it. No, there is only one thing to be done. I must kill as many men as possible. I must destroy all that it is possible to destroy because if we destroy enough the monster will have nothing to feed upon. He, too, will die . . . and with him this civilization . . . banal, ugly, materialistic, unchristian . . . this greed-ridden world."

The Uhlan fell forward upon the table, burying his face in his arms. At the sight Lily raised herself gently and watched her strange companion in a wondering silence. At last she said softly, "Why do you tell me this? Is it because you are afraid?"

The man made a chuckling, confused, sound and sat up once more. "Ah, no! Madame. You fancy I am hysterical. Well, so I am. I don't deny it. You see it is not easy for me to be a warrior. I am a little mad. No, I talk like this because . . ." For a moment he hesitated as if groping for some

explanation of an emotional crisis which in a soldier was not logical at all. His manner seemed to imply that he should have accepted the affair without question. "Because . . . Well, there is a time when fear does not matter, when terror does not exist, when one is enveloped by a despair so great that what happens to one's body is of no concern. You understand that. You have answered it yourself a little time before, when you said there came a time when it was useless to be afraid." He leaned back and made a little gesture of negation. "It does not matter," he concluded. In the faint light from the lower windows of the château it was plain that he was smiling in a bitter, despairing fashion. "No, I shall go on killing until I am killed. It will not be a long affair. It is absurd to hope that I shall live many more days." He whistled softly. "I might even be killed to-night . . . after I have left you. I shall kill as many men as possible. I can only submit. There is nothing I can do. I am not a boy full of playing soldier."

At this Lily winced suddenly as if he had struck her. Then she raised herself slowly. The black cloak fell from her shoulders.

"I have in the war a son and a lover," she said. "If you met them, you would kill them. Is it not so?"

The Uhlan bowed his head in silent assent.

"And yet you do not believe in it?"

"No, Madame."

"Then that is wrong. It is sinful."

The stranger leaned toward her. "It is not I who would kill them. I am only a chance, a little dagger in the hand of fate . . . one of a billion chances that have to do with their deaths. I myself would not be killing them. . . . It would be a strange . . . even an impossible accident, if I killed one of them with my own hands. You understand, we are talking facts now . . . hard facts. There is no room for sentimentality at a time like this. . . ." He smiled ironically. "I can understand that it is difficult for a woman to talk facts. It is simply a matter of chances . . . like roulette shall we say?"

For a time Lily remained thoughtful and silent. At last she said, "They are in the cavalry like yourself. You would kill them. You are one of the chances." The calmness of her

manner stood in terrible contrast to the hysterical outburst of the soldier.

"I can see you are a philosopher . . . a *femme savant*," mocked the stranger.

"You might choose a better time to jeer."

The man coughed. "Forgive me. . . . I am sorry. . . . I was wrong. If you were a *femme savant*, I would not be talking to you like this. . . . You are a woman . . . a beautiful woman. One cannot help talking to you."

"I am only a woman living by what she believes. That is simple enough."

"It requires courage, Madame . . . and indifference, far more of both than I have." He coughed again, nervously. "Perhaps I am too rational. . . . Perhaps I do not think resistance worth the trouble . . . especially now, at a time when the mob . . . the politicians rule absolutely."

"You are one of the chances," Lily repeated stubbornly.

LXXXI

THE German laughed softly. "You are a primitive woman, Madame. It refreshes me to find a woman so charmingly direct, so completely feminine. There are not many left. It is a quality which should always accompany beauty. If a woman is not beautiful, it does not matter." He paused waiting for her to speak and when she said nothing, he continued. "I envy your lover. He is a fortunate man."

At this Lily stirred once more. It was a faint movement, yet it carried a warning of anger.

"Of course, you may say and do what you please," she said. "I am completely helpless."

The Uhlan rattled his spurs in the darkness. "Come . . . come, now. I have no intention of harming you. I told you that before. It seems to me that this once . . . on a night such as this . . . we might talk honestly . . . as if there was no nonsense in the world. I do not know your name and you do not know mine. We shall never meet again, for I, no doubt, will be dead before many days. You have admitted that you have a lover." He leaned across the table with a curious pleading gesture. "You see, I am tired. I mean to say that I am wearied of keeping up deceptions. Has it ever occurred to you how many barriers surround us all . . . even those friends whom we know very well. The countless secrets which lie behind them . . . the things which we never know, even about our dearest friends. For once . . . just once, it would be a delight to talk without pretense . . . to speak as if each one of us were free, quite free, to do as he pleased . . . to answer to no one, to fear no one. There is no more freedom in the world. There are too many people in the world. And the life of no one is any longer his own." He paused and passed a thin, nervous hand across his brow as if

he would clear away some entanglement which had entrapped his thoughts. "I cannot say what I mean. I, like all the others, have kept my secrets hidden for too long a time. You see, if it were possible for us to talk thus with freedom . . . we might separate, you knowing me and I knowing you, better than any one else in the world." He laughed and his mood changed quickly from a resigned weariness back to the old mocking flippancy. "It is an interesting idea, but impossible of course . . . because we no longer know even ourselves. We have sacrificed ourselves to those who crowd in upon us, who dare not share our secrets . . . because the crowd is too stupid . . . too cowardly . . . too weak . . . too bereft of understanding. The crowd is like sheep. They must be protected by little shepherd laws . . . against themselves. And so the strong are sacrificed to the weak. That will put an end to us all some day . . . an end to all this blessed civilization. Ah, if you knew how stupid sheep can be. I have a farm in Silesia, Madame. I can tell you all about sheep." For an instant he paused, considering the imbecility of sheep. "And socialism! It's no better, Madame. It simply buries the individual deeper under layers of muck. No, it is all wrong from the bottom up. We must kill . . . kill . . . you understand . . . until there is room to breathe! Until the earth is freed of the sheep! Then we can be free! Then we can find solitude!"

Again his voice rang with subdued frenzy. Inside the house the frivolous gilt traveling clock struck midnight, and far away in the direction of Trilport there arose again the faint crackling sound like the brush fires. It rose and fell, tossed about at the caprice of the night wind.

"They have begun again," said the Uhlán. "In a little while I shall be forced to leave. You see, we cannot remain here. We have pushed in too far." He leaned forward and drew with his lighted cigarette upon the top of the table between them a V shaped line. "You see," he said, indicating the point of the V. "We have been pushed in here. . . . We cannot possibly remain. It is as far as we shall advance. We have come too far already. Any fool could see it. Any fool but Von Kluck. . . . Why, my boot boy would know it." He

laughed again. "But my boot boy is not a general. He is not stupid enough."

He kept wriggling, wriggling helplessly, like a butterfly impaled by a pin . . . an individualist, a lonely man, caught by the savage rush of the mob.

LXXXII

WHAT he said appeared to pass ignored by Lily, for when he had finished she began to talk once more. "I can understand the bravery of fighting for that which you believe," she said. "I cannot understand yielding without a fight to the monster you despise. I knew a man. . . ." For a second she hesitated. "He fought for what he believed. He gave up everything for the fight . . . his health, his friends, his work, his money. He was beaten and bloody and wounded. He would have given his life if it had been necessary. He was a poor, ignorant Ukrainian peasant . . . a Russian who could barely read. Yet he fought. He fought and learned . . . up from nothing." Again she paused and the distant crackling sound filled in the silence, this time more distinct and sharp, nearer at hand. "You see, I am telling you this because it is the very monster that you hate which he too fought. He is still fighting it. In the end he will win. . . . If one could not believe such things, one could not live. He will go on fighting because there is inside him something which will not let him stop. But there are not many like him. There are too many like you."

Her voice carried the ring of supreme scorn. There was a quality of iciness in it, penetrating, contemptuous, acid.

Suddenly she covered her face with her hands. "In times like this," she said, "I think of him. It helps one to live." And after a moment, she added bitterly. "He would not have gone off to kill!"

"I can see, Madame," said the stranger, "that you despise me."

"It is more than that," answered Lily, her face still covered by her white hands. "I am certain now that I hate you."

The Uhlan frowned. "I am sorry," he said, "I thought you were sympathetic."

The only answer was a laugh, incredibly cold and savage from so beautiful a woman.

Within the château more lights appeared, and in the courtyard there rose the sound of hoofs striking the cobblestones and of orders being shouted back and forth in guttural German. Far away to the east a solitary cannon barked. The noise ripped the blue stillness with the sound of a tapestry being torn.

"You have forgotten," said Lily, "that I have a son and a lover in the war. You understand, they too are in the cavalry."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the air was shattered by the terrific rattle of a dozen rifles fired simultaneously below the terrace somewhere among the buildings of the farm. A faint glare trembled above the iron bridge and then a second volley, terrifying and abrupt, and a second brief glare.

The Uhlan did not move but Lily sat up suddenly. They remained thus for some time, the woman in an attitude of listening. It appeared that she was straining every nerve, every muscle, lest the faintest sound escape her. When the volley was not repeated she turned her head, slowly and scornfully, in the direction of her companion. In her eyes there was a look of terrible accusation, a look charged with contempt and hatred. The stranger watched her as if fascinated and unable to remove his eyes from her face. At last she spoke, slowly and distinctly, in an awed, breathless whisper.

"What was that?"

The face of the Uhlan remained smooth and empty of all expression, as clean of all emotion as a bit of smooth white paper. In the flickering light from the lanterns which moved among the trees, the countenance appeared vague and lineless, almost imbecile in its negation. Then slowly his lips moved.

"It is the curé, Madame. . . . They have shot the curé." The voice was as smooth as the face. It carried the hard, mocking cruelty of indifference. "They caught him signaling with his lantern from the steeple of the church."

Without a sound Lily lay back once more and buried her face in her cloak. Her body shook silently.

"I could do nothing else," continued the smooth voice. It came out from the thin lipped mouth as a serpent from a crevice in a rock. "It was not I who killed. I had nothing to say in the matter. I did what I could not help doing. *Enfin*, it was the monster!"

Across the fields of wheat from the direction of Meaux the faint crackling sound came nearer and nearer. It was as if the grain had caught fire and the flames were rushing toward them. Lily still lay with her eyes covered as if to shut out the picture which had risen in her imagination. M. Dupont . . . the friend of dying Madame Gigon, the priest to whom she had told her life . . . M. Dupont dead among the dunheaps of the farmyard!

Somewhere in the direction of the Trilport bridge, the solitary cannon fired again and as though it had summoned Madame Gigon back to life, they heard her speaking suddenly inside the lodge. She was talking rapidly in a low voice.

"You need not worry, Henri. To-morrow there will be fresh vegetables in from the barrier. At dark, a balloon with two passengers will be released at the Gare St. Lazare. Gabriel himself told me." And then for a time she muttered incoherently and when her speech became clear again, she was saying, "There is a notice on the Rue de Rivoli that they are selling animals in the Jardin de Plantes. For food you understand . . . I hear at ten sous the pound." Again more mumbling and then, "Ah, that one was close. Yesterday a shell exploded in the Boulevard Montparnasse. We must place our faith in God. . . . Yes, we must pray, Henri. There is not enough God in the world."

Then she became silent for a time and the Uhlan said, "Madame is delirious. She is living through 1870. . . . You see we have not progressed at all. It is merely turn about, first the French, and then we take a turn." He laughed a nervous laugh devoid of mirth. "Ah, it is a pretty business, Madame . . . a pretty business. The sooner we are all killed off the better. The animals could manage this world better than we have done."

He had not finished speaking when a sudden rattle of rifles sounded somewhere near at hand, a little to the east by the copse in the long meadow. At the same time the confusion in the stables and the little park redoubled. A horse whinnyed. Men shouted. Water pails were overturned. Out of the darkness a man in rough gray uniform appeared and addressed the Captain in excited, guttural German. The Uhlans had

begun to leave the stable. They were making their way through the black trees over the neatly ordered flowers to the gate in the garden wall.

The stranger talked for a moment with the soldier and then rising, he said, "Good-by, Madame. It is not likely that we shall ever meet again. I thank you for the conversation. It saved the night for an insomniac. It is more stimulating to talk with a beautiful woman than with common soldiers."

Lily lay buried in her cloak. She did not even uncover her face, but the Uhlan bowed in a polite ironic fashion and slipped away through the trees, vanishing at once like a shadow. The uproar in the château gardens and in the stable increased. It swallowed the stranger.

As the sound of his footsteps died away, she raised herself cautiously and looked about her. The sound of firing continued. The air was full of an unearthly red glow. Supporting herself on one elbow she saw that the light came from the opposite side of the river. The farm had been fired by the departing troops. For a time she watched the flames, eating their way slowly at the windows and along the eaves, growing always in intensity. The iron bridge was filled with retreating Uhlans, all black against the red haze. The thunder of hoofs on the planks again filled the air.

LXXXIII

THUS she remained as if under a spell, ignoring the uproar that had arisen all about her, in the fields, in the château garden and along the tow-path. When at last she moved, it was to sit up and place her feet upon the ground where they struck some hard object that made a clicking, metallic sound as it grated against the stone. Reaching down, her fingers closed over the cold metal of a lugar pistol. In the confusion and the shouting it had slipped from its holster. The stranger had forgotten it. Slowly she raised the weapon and held it up in the glow of the burning farm. For a long time she regarded the pistol as if it held some sinister fascination and presently, leaning upon the back of her chair, she rose slowly and concealed it in the folds of her cloak. When she had gained a full sense of her balance, she moved off from the terrace through the black trees in the direction of the iron bridge.

The firing had increased. There were cries in French and in guttural German, and from the shrubbery along the garden wall the low moan of a wounded soldier. With the long cloak trailing across the dewy grass she continued to move in an unswerving line to the garden gate. As she passed through it a stray bullet, striking the wall beside her, chipped the ancient mortar into her face and her thick, disordered hair. Outside on the towpath she walked until she stood on the little knoll above the iron bridge.

In the center of the structure could be discerned the figures of three men silhouetted against the flames of the burning farm. Two were kneeling at work on some object which absorbed all their attention. The third stood upright shielding his eyes from the glow, keeping watch and urging them to hurry. He was slim and very neat, and carried himself with a singular air of scorn. Unmistakably he was the visitor, the stranger upon the

terrace. At the far end of the bridge, three horses, held in check by the rider of a fourth horse, curvetted and neighed in terror at the leaping flames.

All this Lily saw from the eminence of the low knoll. And when she had watched it for some time she raised her arm, holding the lugar pistol, and slowly took careful aim. The cloak slipped from her shoulders into the grass. Once she fired and then again and again. The slim, neat man stumbled suddenly, struck his head against an iron girder of the bridge and slipped struggling into the river. There was a faint splash and he disappeared. Of the other two men, one fell upon his face, struggled up again and, aided by his companion, crawled painfully toward the terrified horses. The flames roared wildly. The horses leapt and curvetted for a moment and then disappeared with their riders, followed by the horse whose rider lay at the bottom of the Marne.

On the low knoll the pistol dropped from Lily's hand and slipped quietly into the river. A party of three French infantrymen coming suddenly out of the sedges along the river discovered her lying in the thick wet grass. Bending over her they talked volubly for a time and at last carried her back through the gate into the lodge. They could wring from her no sort of rational speech. She kept talking in the strangest manner, repeating over and over again, "It is simply a matter of chance . . . like roulette . . . but one of a million chances . . . but one . . . but one. . . . Still one chance is too many."

Inside the lodge, one of the soldiers struck a sulphur match and discovered in the bed by the window the body of an old woman. He summoned his companions and they too leaned over the body. Beyond all doubt the old woman was dead.

LXXXIV

FROM that night on the sound of firing grew steadily more faint and the glow in the sky more dim. There were times when Lily, lying delirious in the lodge under the care of Madame Borgue, the farmer's wife, behaved in the wildest manner. When the wind blew from the north, it carried the sound of the guns across forests and wheatfields into the park at Germigny and the barrage, no longer confused and close at hand, took on a pulsing regular throb like the beating of surf upon a beach of hard shingle. At such times Lily would sit up and talk wildly in a mixture of French and English of Mills and monsters, of cauldrons, of white hot metal that absorbed the very bodies of men. The distant rumbling was for all the world like the pounding which had enveloped Cypress Hill in the days of Lily's youth. But Madame Borgue, knowing nothing of all this, could make no sense of the ravings of her patient.

She remained a long time ill. While she lay unconscious with the fever, Madame Gigon was buried among the beaded *couronnes* of the cemetery at Trilport between her obscure husband, the curator, and the father who had been ruined by his loyalty to Napoleon the Little.

It happened that on the very day of the lonely funeral, Madame de Cyon died in Paris of indigestion brought on by overeating and the loss of twenty francs at bridge, played secretly to be sure, for in those days no one played bridge in Paris. So Madame Gigon, by dying first, was cheated out of her triumphant, "I told you so!" Of course, it may have been that in another world she knew this satisfaction; for it was true that Nadine "went off just like that."

And in early October, on the first day that Lily ventured from the lodge out upon the green terrace, she read in the Figaro that she had been decorated with the Croix de Guerre. The citation appeared in the midst of the military news.

"Shane, Madame Lily. Widow. American by birth. Decorated for valor at Germigny l'Evêc during the Battle of the Marne, when she prevented a detachment of Uhlans from destroying an iron bridge of the utmost importance to our troops."

This she read aloud to Madame Borgue. It was tiny paragraph, printed in very small black type, and it caused Lily to laugh, bitterly, mirthlessly. Letting fall the Figaro by the side of her chair, she lay back.

"As if," she said, "I had ever thought of the bridge! As if I even knew that they were trying to destroy it!"

And when Madame Borgue, alarmed by this outburst, sought to lead her back into the house, Lily said, "I am not delirious. . . . Truly . . . I am not. It is so absurdly funny!" And she laughed again and again.

She never knew that it was M. de Cyon who brought the affair to the attention of the Ministry of War and secured her the distinction.

Slowly it became clear that fate had not allotted to the dead Uhlan the chance of Césaire's death. She received no news of him. Even M. de Cyon, in the government at Paris, could discover nothing. The hours grew into days and the days into months until, at last, she was able to leave the lodge and visit Jean in the hospital at Neuilly. There came at length a day when there was no longer any doubt. The Baron was simply among the missing . . . the great number concerning whom there was no news. It was as if he had bade her farewell at the vine-covered gate and galloped off on the black horse into a darkness which swallowed him forever.

In Paris, the house in the Rue Raynouard acquired an air of complete desolation. There was no one, not even Jean who lay at the hospital in Neuilly with his right leg amputated at the knee, to share it with Lily. The mirrors reflected nothing save the figures of the mistress, the servants and M. de Cyon who appeared to find consolation for his recent loss in visits to the big house at Numero Dix.

Ellen, escaped at last from Central Europe, had returned to America. Madame Gigon was dead. Of her friends none remained. Madame de Cyon was in her grave. Madame Blaise still lived in a polite madhouse, convinced that the war was

only a revolution which would place her friend, the wine merchant, upon the throne of a glorified and triumphant France. The others? Some had gone into the provinces, and of those who remained, all were interested in their own families. They had sons, brothers, nephews, cousins, at the front. . . . There were no more *salons*. It was impossible to go alone to the theater. There remained nothing to do but visit Jean (a sad business though he seemed cheerful enough) and sit in the big empty house, so silent now, so empty of chatter, of music, of laughter. Even the great piano under the glowing Venice of Mr. Turner remained closed and silent save in the rare moments when Lily, as if unable any longer to endure the silence, opened it and played with only half a heart the tunes which once had filled the house and overflowed into the garden. It was clear that it required more than mirrors, jades, pictures and old carpets to make a dwelling endurable. As Lily remarked to M. de Cyon at tea one afternoon in early November, these things, each one the reminder of some precious association, only rendered Numero Dix the more unbearable.

"I can understand," she said, "that sometimes my mother must have died of loneliness in the house at Cypress Hill."

She told M. de Cyon the history of the burned house, bit by bit, from the day it was built until the day it was destroyed. Indeed she told him all the story of her father, of her own childhood, of the Mills and the Town. She even told him something of Irene's story, though not enough to be sure for him to evolve the whole truth, for there were certain barriers beyond which she allowed no one to penetrate; no one save an old village priest who was, after all, not a man but an agent of God himself. And he was dead now.

In those days the pair drew more closely to each other, as if they found in the friendship a consolation for the melancholy and overwhelming loneliness. And it is true that Lily had grown more sympathetic. The old carefree gaiety had given place to a new and more gentle understanding. The indolence, it seemed, had vanished before a new determination to dominate her own aimless existence. She had grown more calm. Indeed there were times now when she became wholly grave and serious, even pensive, as she sat quietly with the pleasant, white-

haired Frenchman who found her company so agreeable that he seldom permitted a day to pass without calling at Numero Dix on his way from the Ministry of War. She became, as she had observed to Willie Harrison, more and more like her mother.

Each day was like the one before, and this monotony to Lily must have been a new and painful experience. The only variation occurred when Paul Schneidermann, returning from a hospital in Cannes, arrived in Paris and became a second visitor at the house in the Rue Raynouard. But even in this there was an inexpressible sadness, for the bullet which had wounded Schneidermann paralyzed forever his left arm. He was never again able to play the piano in the long drawing-room nor the cello he had brought to the house when Ellen was there.

With Ellen gone, the American newspapers no longer found their way into the house. Indeed it seemed impossible to obtain them anywhere in Paris, even if Lily had been capable of such an effort. So there were no more clippings for the enameled box. The last one bore the date of the first month of the war. Since then there had been nothing. It was as if Krylenko, too,—the Krylenko whose progress Lily watched from so great a distance—had died or gone away like all the others. There remained only the wreckage of a life which had once been complete, content, even magnificent in its quiet way.

When at last Jean was able to leave the hospital, he secured through M. de Cyon an appointment at the Ministry of War. As for Lily, she undertook presently the establishment of a soup kitchen for soldiers who passed through Paris on leave. But at this diversion she was no more successful than she had been at knitting socks for the strikers; and after a few months she abandoned it completely to the care of women less wealthy and more capable. She continued, however, until the end to supply it lavishly with money. In her enthusiasm for the charities of the war she succeeded in exhausting for the first time her annual income. She even dipped into her principal. The two hundred thousand dollars which the Town paid her for Cypress Hill she used to provide food and comfort for the soldiers of another nation.

LXXXV

IN the Town no new railway station raised its splendors because in those years the Town and the Mills were too busy making money. In all the haste even the new railway station was forgotten. The deserted park became a storing place for the shells which the Mills turned out in amazing numbers. Gas shells, high explosives, shrapnel cases . . . all these things were piled high along the brick paths where delphiniums and irises once flourished. Even the Venus of Cydnos and the Apollo Belvedere, cracked and smudged in the niches of the dead hedge, were completely buried beneath munitions. Because somewhere in the world men were being killed, the Mills did an enormous business. The Town grew as it had never before grown. Prices were tremendous. The place reeked with prosperity and progress. People even said that the war would finish Germany, that no longer would she be able to compete in the great steel markets of the world. And that, of course, meant more prosperity, more riches.

The flames leapt high above the furnaces. The great sheds echoed with such a pounding as had never before been heard upon this earth. Girls in gas masks worked long hours filling shells with corroding acids which turned their faces haggard, and yellow as the aprons they wore. Little clerks acquired automobiles. Men who dealt in real estate grew rich. Every one would have been content, save for an insatiable appetite for even greater wealth.

Once, to be sure, there occurred an explosion which was for all the world like the end of everything. Forty-seven blackened bodies were carried out under white sheets which clung to the scorched flesh. Of seventeen others nothing at all was found save a few bones, a hand or a foot, a bit of blackened skin; and from these it was impossible to construct any thing. So they were dumped into great trenches, and when the earth had

covered them, the world rushed merrily on. The flames leapt higher and redder than ever. The sheds fairly split with the sound of hammering. The little clerks dashed about madly in the sudden luxury of their motors. Every one had money. The Town was prosperous. It grew until it was the biggest in the state. Progress rattled on like everything, so nothing else mattered.

In Paris the war came to an end. One or two statesmen and a whole flock of politicians, after swooping about for a time, descended upon the peace.

In those days Paris acquired an insane and desperate gaiety such as it knew neither before nor since. The bright boulevards swarmed with the soldiers of fourteen nations clad in ten times as many gay uniforms. It became gay and frantic with the neurotic excitement of a madhouse. Street walkers from the provinces, even from Italy and England and Spain, rushed to Paris because business there was so good. In dives and cabarets a barbaric abandon reigned. Every one learned new vices and depravities. Brutes, vulgarians, savages stalked the avenues. Overnight boys became old men, burdened with a corroding wisdom which otherwise they might never have known.

And in the Town people shook their heads sagely and said that war was a great thing when it was fought in a just cause. "It purifies!" they said. "It brings out the finest side of men!"

What was prosperous was right. Wasn't success its own vindication? About this there could be no argument. Money talks, my boy! Money talks! What is successful is right. Germany, the bully among nations! Germany, the greedy materialistic Germany, was done in forever.

Of course it may have been that when they spoke of War as the Great Purifier, they were thinking of the vast army of the Dead.

LXXXVI

WHEN politicians gather it is necessary to have conventions, receptions, or some sort of a congregation where they may talk or at least make of themselves a spectacle. And so it happened that Paris, where most of the politicians in the world had congregated, began to break out as if suffering from a disease with receptions at this hotel, or that embassy or this palace. It was important that every one should see every one else. It was an opportunity not to be overlooked.

And so it happened that Lily Shane, one gray afternoon in the late winter, found herself for the first time in years surrounded by her countrymen. Rather weary, confused, and a little breathless, she discovered a refuge from the throng in a little alcove of the Hotel Crillon by a window which gave out upon the wide spaces of the Place de la Concorde. The white square was filled now with trophies. High on the terrace of the Tuileries gardens lay a row of shattered aeroplanes—hawklike Gothas, Fokkers like chimney swifts, all torn and battered now, their bright wings bedraggled by the mud and grease of victory. At intervals along the parapet rose great pyramids of German helmets; empty, ghastly, like the heaps of skulls strewn by Ghengis Khan to mark his triumphant progress across the face of Europe. Near the obelisk—so ancient, so withdrawn, so aloof, survivor of a dozen civilizations—the captured guns crouched together pointing their steel muzzles mutely toward the low gray sky. Some came from the great furnaces of the Krupps, some from the celebrated Skoda mills. In the circle marked by the seven proud cities of France, the statues of Lille and Strasbourg, no longer veiled in crêpe, stood impassive, buried beneath heaps of wreaths and flowers. The whole square appeared dimly through the mists that rose from the Seine. The fog hung low and gray, clinging in torn veils about the silent

guns, settling low upon the pyramids of empty, skull-like helmets, caressing the hard, smooth granite of the eternal obelisk that stood aloof, mocking, ironic, silent.

Lily sat alone watching the spectacle of the square, as if conscious that in that moment she was at the very heart of the world. Behind her at a little distance moved a procession of figures, confused, grotesque, in the long crystal-hung corridors. It circulated restlessly through the big rooms, moving about the gilt furniture, past the gilt framed mirrors, brushing the heavy curtains. There were British, French, Belgians, Italians, Portuguese, triumphant Japanese, smiling secretly perhaps at the spectacle in the misty Place de la Concorde. There was, of course, a vast number of Americans, . . . politicians, senators, congressmen, mere meddlers, some in neat cutaways, some in gray or blue suits. There were women among them . . . a great many women, brave in mannish clothes, dominating and active in manner.

In all the crowd, so merry, so talkative over the victory, the figure of Lily, withdrawn and silent, carried an inexpressible air of loneliness. It was as if she imitated the obelisk and turned a scornful back upon the restless, gaudy spectacle. She was dressed all in black in a neat suit and a close fitting hat that covered all but a narrow band of amber hair. About her full white throat she wore a tight collar of big pearls. She was no longer young. The voluptuous curves had vanished. She was thinner and, despite the rouge on her lips and cheeks, appeared old. The youthful sparkle of her dark eyes had given place to a curious, hard brilliance. The old indolence appeared to have vanished forever. She sat upright, and at the moment the poise of her body carried a curious sense of likeness to the defiance which had been her mother's. Yet despite all these things she was beautiful. It was impossible to deny her beauty, even though its quality of flamboyance was gone forever. The new beauty was serene, distinguished, worldly—above all else calm. Even the weariness of her face could not destroy a beauty which had to do as much with spirit as with body. She was, after all, no pretty blond thing of the sort which fades into a haggard old age. She was a fine woman, a magnificent woman, not to be overlooked even with youth gone forever.

After a time she turned away from the window and fell to watching the procession of figures. Her rouged lips were curved in the faintest of mocking smiles,—a smile which conveyed a hint of scoffing at some colossal futility, a smile above all else of sophistication and weariness, as if she were at once amused and saddened by the spectacle. Yet it was a kindly smile, tolerant, sympathetic, colored by a hint of some secret, profound, and instinctive wisdom. Motionless, she sat thus for a long time stirring only to fumble with the clasp of the silver bag that lay in her lap. No one noticed her, for she took no part in the spectacle. She sat apart, a little in the shadow, in a backwater, while the noisy tempestuous throng pushed its way through the long vista of gilded, rococo rooms.

LXXXVII

SHE must have been sitting there for half an hour when the smile vanished suddenly and the fingers fumbling with the silver bag grew still. Her face assumed an expression of rigidity, the look of one who has seen something in which he is not quite able to believe.

Moving toward her down the long vista of crystal and brocade curtains came a man. He was a big man, tall, massive, handsome in a florid way. He must have been in his middle fifties, although there was but little gray in the thick black hair which he wore rather long in a fashion calculated to attract the notice of passersby. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles and a flowing black tie in striking contrast to the gray neatness of his cutaway and checkered waistcoat. Unmistakably he was an American. His manner carried the same freedom, the identical naive simplicity which characterized the figure of the vigorous Ellen. He possessed the same overflowing vitality. Even as Lily stood, silently, with her back to the tragic spectacle of the square, the vitality overflowed suddenly in a great explosive laugh and a slap on the back of a friend he had encountered in the throng. Above the subdued murmur, the sound of his booming voice reached her.

"Well, well, well! . . . And what are you doing in wicked Paris? Come to fix up the peace, I suppose!"

The answer of the stranger was not audible. The pair withdrew from the path of the procession and talked for a moment. The conversation was punctuated from time to time by the sudden bursts of laughter from the man in the checkered waistcoat.

In her corner Lily leaned forward a little in order to see more clearly the figure which had fascinated her. Presently he turned, bade his friend good-by and moved away again, coming directly down the vista toward Lily. He walked with

a swinging stride, and as he approached his large face beamed with satisfaction. He turned his head from side to side with a patronizing air, an air which to Lily must have been startlingly familiar. Even twenty years could not have dissipated the memory of it. It was this which identified him beyond all doubt. He beamed to right and to left. His whole figure betrayed an enormous self-satisfaction. It was impossible any longer to doubt. The man was the Governor. His success was written upon a face now grown heavy and dark.

When he had advanced to within a few paces of Lily's corner, she rose and moved toward him. Only once did she hesitate and then at the very moment he passed by her. Putting out her hand in a furtive movement, she withdrew it hastily. He passed and was on his way to disappearing once more in the throng. For a second she leaned against the wall and then, as if she could no longer resist the temptation, she moved quickly forward and touched his shoulder.

"Henry," she said softly and waited.

The Governor turned and for an instant his face was clouded by a look of bewilderment. Then slowly, almost breathlessly, he recovered himself. The beaming look vanished completely, replaced by an expression of the greatest gravity.

"Lily . . . !" he said. "Lily Shane. . . . For the love of God!"

She drew him aside out of the path of the procession.

"Then you remember me?" she said with a faint, amused smile. "Twenty years is not such a long time."

Again he looked at her. "Lily . . . Lily Shane!" he said. And he took her hand and pressed it with a savage, startled warmth.

"I knew you," she said. "I knew you at once. . . . There are some things about a person which never change . . . little things which *are* the person . . . not much . . . a gesture perhaps. . . . You were unmistakable."

And when he had recovered a little from his astonishment, he managed to say, "It's the last place I'd expect to see you."

Lily laughed at him, in a fashion which must have destroyed suddenly the wall of twenty years. It was a fashion of laughing which belonged to her alone. It was provocative, faintly

mocking. Willie Harrison knew it well. "I've lived in Paris for the last twenty years," she retorted with an amused grimace, "and I'm still here. I will be until I die."

Spontaneity does not come easily to a conversation between persons reunited unexpectedly after twenty years; and it was plain that the circumstances surrounding the separation contributed nothing to the facility of the conversation. Lily appeared to have forgotten, or at least to have disregarded the night following the garden party at Cypress Hill. Her manner was that of an old friend, nothing more, nothing less. If she knew any shame, she concealed it admirably. Plainly it was not so easy for her companion. The sudden pallor which had attacked his florid face gave place to a blushing scarlet. He was like a little boy caught in a shameful act.

"You haven't changed much," she said as if to clear the way, "I mean you yourself have not changed . . . not your figure."

He laughed. "I'm fatter . . . much fatter."

It was true.

What had once been clearly a barrel-like chest was sunk to the low estate of a stomach. "But you," he continued, "You haven't changed at all. You're as young as ever."

"You still say the right thing, Henry. But it isn't the truth. I use rouge now. . . . I even dye my hair a little. We can't pretend we're not growing old. It's no use. It's written. . . . It's in our faces."

The Governor thrust a hand into his pocket and fell to jingling a few francs and a key ring. With the other hand he took out his watch. "Couldn't we find some place to sit?" he said. "We might talk for a little while." He coughed nervously. "I haven't much time."

At this she again laughed at him. Her laugh had not grown old. It remained unchanged, still ringing with the same good humor.

"I've no intention of keeping you," she said. "You may go whenever you like." For an instant she cast down her eyes. "When I saw you, I couldn't resist. . . . I had to speak to you. Nothing could have prevented it. I felt, you see, as if I were possessed."

And then she led him back to the corner by the tall window overlooking the misty square. It had grown darker and the cold fog now veiled completely the buildings on the far side of the river. There was only the great square filled with cannon and helmets and shattered planes and above the mass of trophies the rigid, eternal obelisk piercing the mist like a sword.

There they settled themselves to talk, lost in a throng which paid no heed to the middle-aged couple in the alcove. The Governor remained ill at ease, sitting forward upon the edge of his chair as if prepared to spring up and escape at the first opportunity. Lily, so calm, so placid, appeared only to inspire him with confusion. It may have been that she aroused a whole train of memories which he had succeeded in forgetting.

For a time, the conversation flowed along the most stiff and conventional of channels. There were polite inquiries after each other's health. Lily told him of her mother's death, of the fire at Cypress Hill, of the fact that she had severed the last tie with the Town and would never return to it.

"Never?" asked the Governor. "Never?"

"No. Why should I? It is not the same. I have nothing there to call me back. My life is here now. I shall probably die here. The Town is nothing to me."

The Governor's face lighted suddenly. He struck his thigh—a thigh which had once been so handsome and now was flabby with fat—a sharp blow.

"No, it is not the same. You've no idea how it has grown. I was there about six months ago. It's twice as big as in the old days. You know, it's now one of the greatest steel towns in the world. You've a right to be proud of it."

But Lily said nothing. She was looking out of the tall window into the white square.

"And Ellen," the Governor continued, "I hear she has become famous." He laughed. "Who would have thought it? I remember her as a bad-tempered little girl with pigtails. Of course I know nothing about music. It's not in my line. But they say she's great."

When she did not answer him, he regarded her silently for a time and presently he coughed as if to attract her attention.

At last he leaned forward a little and said, "What are you thinking?"

For an instant, an unexpected note of tenderness entered his voice. He peered at her closely, examining her soft white skin, the soft hair that escaped from beneath her toque, the exquisite poise of her throat and head. To this scrutiny Lily put an end by turning with a smile to say, "Thinking? I was thinking that there is something hopelessly sad about having no happy realities in the place where you spent your childhood. You see, if I were to go back, I should find nothing. Cypress Hill burned. . . . My Uncle Jacob's farm buried under new houses, each one like its neighbor, in ugly cheap rows . . . the brook ruined by oil and filth. Why, even the people aren't the same. There's no one I should like to see except perhaps Willie Harrison, and it's a long way to go just to see one person. I was thinking that if I'd been born in France, I would have had memories of a village and green country and pleasant stone houses. The people would be the same always. . . . I couldn't go back to the Town now. I couldn't. . . . I have memories of it. I wouldn't want them spoiled." For an instant the tears appeared in her eyes. She leaned toward him and touched his hand. "It's not that I'm disloyal, Henry. Don't think that. It's that I have nothing to be loyal to . . . nothing that I can cherish but memories. I couldn't be happy there because there's nothing but noise and ugliness. I suppose that somewhere in America there are towns full of realities that one could love, but they aren't in my part of the country. There's nothing there." There was a little pause and she added, "It's all happened so quickly. Think of it—it's all happened since I was a little girl."

All this the Governor, it seemed, failed to understand. He looked at her with a hopeless expression of bewilderment. But he said, "Yes, I understand." And again an awkward silence enveloped them.

At last Lily turned to him. "Tell me," she said, "you've been successful. Tell me about yourself."

The Governor leaned back a little in his chair. "But you must have heard all that," he said with astonishment. "It's

been in the newspapers. If you're in politics you can't keep out of the press." The beaming look returned to his eyes and with it the old manner of condescension.

But you forget," replied Lily. "I haven't read American newspapers. I've been away from America for a long time."

"To be sure . . . to be sure." He coughed nervously. "There isn't much to tell. I've been elected senator now for five terms running. I guess I can go on being elected as long as I live. I've gotten what I've set out for. . . . I'm a success in my party. I helped to frame the tariff bill that protected American industry and gave the Town a bigger boom than it ever had before. Oh, I've done my share! . . . Perhaps more than my share! We have a good life in Washington, my wife and I. She's prominent, you know. She's chairman of the State Woman's Republican Committee. Oh, she's very prominent . . . a born leader and a splendid politician. You should hear her make a speech."

Lily listened with an air of profound interest. She was smiling again. As Willie Harrison said, "It was impossible to know what Lily thought. She was always smiling."

The Governor was over-zealous; somehow it seemed that he protested too much.

"Isn't that fine?" she said. "You see, Henry, it has worked out as I told you it would. I should have made you a wretched wife. I would have been no good in politics."

This, it seemed, made him nervous again. He sat forward on the edge of his chair. It was clear that he became terrified when the conversation turned too abruptly toward certain incidents of his youth. It was impossible for him to talk simply and easily. Something kept intruding. Lily may have guessed what it was, for she was a woman of experience in such things. Her companion was merely uncomfortable. He stood up and looked out into the misty square where the lights had begun to show through the fog in little globes of indefinite yellow.

"Extraordinary," he said, "the number of motors in the square." He turned toward her with a sudden enthusiasm. "There you have it! There's America for you . . . motor upon motor! There are more motors with the American High

Commission than with any other two combined. We're a rich country, Lily. The war has made us powerful. We can rule the world and do as we please. It's ours from now on. . . . The future is ours if these fools on the American commission don't spoil everything."

Lily smiled again. "Yes. It's quite wonderful. We ought to be proud."

"But you are, aren't you?" he asked severely.

"Yes."

"That's one reason I came over here . . . to put an end to this league of nations nonsense. We won the war and now they're trying to wriggle out. There's no reason we should be mixed up in their troubles. . . . There's no reason we should suffer for it. It's none of our affair."

He drew himself up until his stomach came near to regaining its old place as a chest. His manner became pompous. It was the identical manner Julia Shane had greeted with derision more than twenty years before in the paneled dining-room at Cypress Hill. It was astounding how little the years had softened him. They had, it seemed, brought him nothing of gentleness, nothing of humor, nothing of wisdom . . . only a certain vulgar shrewdness.

"No," he continued, shaking a finger at her, "I've no intention of letting this nonsense pass. There's no reason why we should help them out of what they themselves created."

Lily's eyes grew large and bright. The smile, mysterious, faintly mocking, persisted. "You're wonderful, Henry," she said. "I always knew what you would be like. Do you remember? I told you once. You are just like that . . . just like my prediction."

From her voice or her manner it was impossible to discover what she meant by this cryptic statement. The Governor interpreted it in his own fashion.

"Well," he said, "I have no intention of seeing the American nation being made a dupe just because we're rich and prosperous and the others have ruined themselves. My wife believes I am quite right. She too expects to make a speaking tour." He became enthusiastic again. "You should hear her speak. She has an excellent voice, and great power."

"Yes," said Lily softly. "I would never be able to do all that. I would have been such a failure. . . ."

"She's here with me now . . . in Paris," continued the Governor. "She'd never been abroad. I thought she would enjoy the sights, too, so I brought her along."

"Is she here to-day?" asked Lily. Again the Governor betrayed signs of an overwhelming confusion.

"Yes," he said, "Yes." And suddenly became silent.

For a moment Lily watched him as if the sight of his confusion provided her with some secret amusement. At length she said, "I'd like to see her. I don't ask to meet her, of course. That would be questionable taste. Besides, why should we meet? We could mean nothing to each other."

"No, perhaps not."

Again he began staring out of the window. Lily glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"I shall be forced to leave soon myself," she said. "My husband will be waiting for me."

With a start her companion turned from the window toward her.

"So you're married," he said. "And you never told me."

"You never asked me about myself. I didn't think you were interested in what my life had been."

He thrust out a great hand. "I must congratulate you!" he said with an overflowing enthusiasm. "I must congratulate you! I knew you'd marry some day. How long has it been?" The news appeared to furnish him with a genuine delight. Perhaps he felt more secure now, less frightened of Lily.

She shook hands with him quietly.

"Not for long. . . . Since three months."

"And what is his name?"

"De Cyon . . . René de Cyon. He is in the new ministry. . . . You see I married a politician after all."

She laughed again in that same mysterious, half-mocking, half-cynical fashion. It was impossible to penetrate the barrier of her composure. She was invulnerable. One could not hazard the faintest guess at what she was thinking.

"That is why I am here to-day." And then for the space of an instant she betrayed herself. "Think of it," she said.

"What a long way from Cypress Hill to being the wife of a French cabinet minister. We've both traveled a long way since we last met, Henry. A great deal has happened to both of us. On my side, I wouldn't change a thing. There are lives and lives, of course. Some like one sort and some another. I know you've been thinking what a lot I've missed by not marrying you." He moved as if to interrupt her. "Oh, I know you didn't say so openly. It's good of you to be so generous . . . to want me to have shared it." She cast down her eyes suddenly and her voice grew more gentle although it still carried that same devilish note of raillery. "I appreciate all that. . . . But I wouldn't have changed anything. I wouldn't have married you anyway."

Again the Governor coughed and looked out of the window.

"We all come to it sooner or later," he said. "It's a good thing to be married."

"Yes . . . a lonely old age isn't pleasant."

And here a deadlock arose once more in the conversation.

The crowd had begun to thin a little. Down the long vista of rooms it was possible now to distinguish a figure here and there in the throng. Outside the darkness had descended, veiling completely the white square. There was nothing now but the faint globes of light and the dim shooting rays of the passing motors.

The Governor turned suddenly and opened his mouth to speak. Then he closed it again sharply. It was clear that he had intended to say something and had lost his courage. He spoke at last, evading clearly what he had intended to say.

"Tell me . . . Where's Irene?"

"She's buried. . . . She's been buried these eleven years."

The Governor frowned.

"I'd no idea," he stammered. "I wouldn't have asked if I had known." He was sinking deeper in his confusion. There was something almost pitiful in his manner, so empty now of pompousness, so devoid of complacency.

Lily smiled. "Oh, she's not dead. She's a nun. She's in the Carmelite convent at Lisieux . . . I meant that she was buried so far as life is concerned. She's lost to the world. She never leaves the convent, you know. It's part of her vow."

She's buried there . . . alive! It's a living death." All at once she cast down her eyes and shuddered. "Perhaps she is dead. . . . When one's faith is killed one is not alive any more. You see, I killed her faith in this world. That's all I meant. She's really buried, . . . alive, you understand."

The Governor made a low whistling sound. "I'm not surprised."

As if she did not hear him, Lily said, "I used to think that it was possible to live by one's self, alone . . . without touching the lives of others. It isn't possible, is it? Life is far too complicated."

The Governor flushed slowly. He turned the speech nervously once more to Irene. "You don't forget how she acted on the night . . ." Suddenly he choked. It was too late now and he finished the speech, inarticulately. "On the night of the garden party!"

LXXXVIII

IT was done now. He had betrayed himself. The wall was down, and before them both there must have arisen once more the painful scene in the library under the malignant portrait of John Shane. (Lily, a young girl, smiling and saying, "I love you, I suppose, but not better than myself. I might have married you once. I cannot now, because I know." Julia Shane, so long dead now, leaning on her ebony stick, hard, unflinching, in the face of everything. "You see, I can do nothing. There is too much of her father in her.")

It stood before them now, the crisis of two lives, naked, stripped of all forgetfulness. The Governor, his face scarlet and apoplectic, remained silent, unable to speak. Lily said softly, "I'm sorry . . . I'm sorry. I should never have mentioned it. I did not guess it would pain you so."

The new gentleness, the new sympathy revealed itself for the first time in all their talk together. It showed in her dark, lustrous eyes. There could be no doubt of it. She was no longer mocking. She was sorry for the lover, grown old, confused now by the memory of a youthful, overwhelming passion. She even touched his hand gently.

"It does not matter now," she said. "After all, it was simply a part of life. I'm not sorry, myself . . . and the world would say that it was I who suffered most. I didn't suffer . . . Believe me, I didn't suffer." She smiled. "Besides what could regrets possibly accomplish? It is the future in which one must live . . . not the past. The longer I live the more certain I am of that."

Still he remained silent. He had become humble, subdued, wilted before the memory of something which had happened more than twenty years before. She must have guessed then, for the first time, what in the unwitting cruelty of her youth

she had never known . . . that he had really suffered, far more deeply than she had ever imagined. It may have been hurt pride, for he was a proud man. It may have been that he had loved her passionately. He was, after all, a crude, unsubtle man who must have regarded the whole affair as dishonorable and wretched. It was clear that the wound had never healed, that it still had the power to cause him pain.

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "I'm sorry. . . . There was never any question of forgiveness. I was not injured. . . . Besides it was more my fault than yours."

And then the Governor did a fantastic thing. He bent over his own fat stomach and raised her hand gently to his lips. There was in the gesture a curious absence of sentimentality. It was not even theatrically self-conscious, as well might have been expected. It was the simple gesture of a man who made speeches before thousands and became helpless and mute before one woman. It was eloquent. It spoke more than whole volumes of words. And somehow it released his tongue.

"The boy?" he said, "What about the boy?"

For a moment Lily did not answer him. She turned away, looking out of the window. She trembled a little and when at last she spoke, it was with averted face, for she lied to him, coldly and with deliberation.

"He is dead," she said gently. "He was killed in the war . . . the very first year, at the beginning." And then she turned with a sudden air of domination over herself and her ravaged, saddened lover. "I must go now," she said. "Good-by, Henry. I wish you luck. I know now that what I respected in you is not dead. It has survived everything. It is not completely destroyed. Until just now, I was afraid."

"Good-by, Lily."

In a moment she was gone, down the long corridor to the spot where M. de Cyon awaited her. Halfway to her destination she turned and saw that the Governor was still watching her. She saw that he watched her despite the fact that he was talking now to a woman, a large woman who was unmistakably his wife. She was deep-bosomed, of the type which becomes masculine with the approach of middle age. She wore flat-heeled shoes and a picture hat with a series of flowing

veils. Her gown was of dark blue foulard, figured with an enormous white pattern. Far out upon her massive bosom hung a gold pince-nez suspended from a little hook fashioned in the shape of an elaborate fleur-de-lis. Her manner was commanding, a manner appropriate to the chairman of the State Woman's Republican Committee. She could, no doubt, make wonderful speeches. Doubtless she had a powerful voice. Certainly her manner with the Governor was executive. It is easy to see that in the world of politics she had contributed much to the success of the husband she worshiped. What energy she had! What an appalling power!

As Lily turned away, she saw that he was still watching her, slyly, wistfully, with his head bent a little.

LXXXIX

IT was not until the spring of 1920 that work was at last begun on the new railway station in the Town. Months before the actual building was undertaken, the Town Council raised on each side of the triangular and barren park at Cypress Hill enormous signs with lettering three feet high. The signs faced the tracks of three great transcontinental railroads. Above the squalor and filth of the Flats they raised their explosive legends. Each read the same.

MAKE YOUR HOME HERE!!!!
THE HIGHEST, HEALTHIEST, LIVEST, BIGGEST
CITY IN THE STATE
EIGHT STEEL MILLS
AND
SIXTY-SEVEN OTHER INDUSTRIES
WATCH US GROW!!!!

In the deserted park at Cypress Hill workmen appeared who cut down the remaining dead trees. The Venus of Cydnos and the Apollo Belvedere were pulled down from their pedestals in the dead hedge. One of the workmen, a Calabrian, carted them off, scrubbed them clean of the corroding soot and set them up in the back yard of his little house in the Flats. They came to a good end, for the workman cherished them earnestly. In the little garden behind his house, which by some miracle of devotion he managed to fill with green things, he placed the two statues on pedestals which he himself constructed of bricks and concrete. At the base he planted ivy which flourished and spread over the cracked marble and the adjoining fence. So in all the desert of the great mill town there was

one corner at least where beauty was worshiped in a humble setting of cabbages and tomato vines. In the evening when the light was not too bright, the little corner looked for all the world like a bit of a Florentine garden.

The steam shovels set to work on a bright April morning with a terrific sound of hissing steam, of grinding cables and clattering chains. In great gulps they tore up the earth which had lain undisturbed since the passing of the second great glacier. For the Town was not satisfied with the destruction of the house at Cypress Hill; it was not content until the Hill itself was scooped up and carted away. It was a wonderful feat and brought the Town a vast amount of advertisement. Pictures of the hill's destruction found their way into the illustrated papers. They were shown in movie palaces in every part of the country.

It happened that on the very day the steam shovels set to work Eva Barr died in the boarding house where she had lived for more than a decade upon the pension provided by her cousin, Lily Shane. Of the family which had founded the Town, she was the last.

On the hill there remained a few people who remembered Cypress Hill in the days of its glory. But most persons had never heard of Shane's Castle and knew nothing of Lily and Irene Shane. When their names were mentioned, the old residents would say, "Yes . . . Lily and Irene. Of course, you never knew them. They belonged to the old Town. Lily was very beautiful and a little fast, so the stories ran, although no one ever knew for certain. Of course, they may be dead by now. I believe Lily was living in Paris the last that was heard of her."

That was all. Within a century Shane's Castle had risen and disappeared. Within a century the old life was gone, and with it the memory of a great, respectable family which had made the history of the county. It survived only in the name of the Town; and that it would have been unprofitable to change since the Town was known round the world as one of the greatest of industrial centers.

XC

WITH Lily's marriage and the end of the war, the house in Rue Raynouard regained something of its old life and gaiety. For M. de Cyon, the match was one surrounded by advantages. His wife was rich and beautiful. She had superb taste. She spoke excellent French and yet she was an American and thus provided a bond with the powerful nation whose favor was invaluable to every nation of Europe. His friends were charmed by her, for she had a way of listening to them, of drinking in their talk with a breathless air. Therefore they declared her not only beautiful but clever, a distinction which even Lily had never claimed. The world knew only that she was an American widow, wealthy, distinguished, beautiful, who had lived very quietly in Paris for more than twenty years. None knew anything against her. Indeed the only person who knew her story was dead, shot in the dungheaps of a French barnyard.

Yet there was, as people said, something about Lily de Cyon that aroused curiosity, even a tenuous suspicion. Somehow she did not fit the story of a quiet existence among the dowdy friends of Madame Gigon. She appeared to have mysterious resources, of instinct, of knowledge, of mystery. *Enfin!* She was a fascinating woman.

The strange gift of the crazy Madame Blaise appeared no longer to fill her with horror; for *The Girl in the Hat* and *The Byzantine Empress* were brought down from their hiding place in the dusty garret of *Numero Dix* and hung on either side of the flaming *Venice* of Mr. Turner. They were greatly admired by the painters whom Paul Schneidermann brought to the house. Some attributed them to Ingres, but none was certain. It was impossible to say who had painted them for they bore no signature. There were some who believed that they were the only great pictures of an obscure artist whose

solitary rise from mediocrity came through the inspiration of a woman, a marvelously beautiful woman with dark amber hair and green white skin.

In the spring of 1920, the postman left with the concierge of Numero Dix a thin letter bordered in black bearing the postmark of Lisieux. It contained only a line or two, the mere mention of the death of Sister Monica. She was buried within the walls of the convent which she had not left in more than thirteen years.

XCI

THE pavilion in the garden Lily gave to M. de Cyon for a study. Here it was her habit to meet him daily on his return from the Ministry when his motor, a gift from her, left him at the gate on the Rue de Passy.

One bright October day of the same year, she went as usual to the pavilion to amuse herself until he arrived by reading the newspapers which were placed upon his table. They lay in a neat pile . . . *Le Journal de Genève*, *Il Seccolo* of Milan, *La Tribuna* of Roma, the *London Post*, the *London Times*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Echo de Paris*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Matin*, *L'Oeuvre*.

She skimmed through them, reading snatches of news, of the opera, and the theater, of society, of politics, of races, the personals in the *London Times* . . . this or that, whatever caught her fancy.

In the drawing-room Ellen and Jean, with his crutches by his side, sat at the piano playing with four hands snatches of music from the operettas of the moment, from *Phi-Phi* and *La Reine Joyeuse*. They sang and laughed as they played. The sound of their gaiety drifted out across the garden.

Lily read the journals until she grew bored. Something had delayed M. de Cyon. Already he was late by half an hour. She came at last, languidly, to the bottom of the pile, to *L'Oeuvre* which lay buried beneath the more pompous and expensive papers. This she never read because it was a socialist daily and therefore dull. Doubtless she would have passed it by again for the hundredth time but a name, buried in one corner in the smallest of print, caught her attention. It must have struck her suddenly with all the force of a blow in the face, for she closed her eyes and leaned back in her chair. The paper slipped to the floor forgotten.

It was a brief paragraph, not more than three or four lines. It recounted the death of one Stepan Krylenko, a man well known as a leader in international labor circles. He died, according to the despatch, of typhus in Moscow whither he had been deported by the American government.

(Perhaps, after all, the Uhlan was right. The Monster would devour them all in the end.)

After a time Lily rose and went out of the pavilion into the garden where she walked slowly up and down for a long time, seating herself at last on the bench under the laburnum tree.

Inside the house the wild merriment persisted. Ellen was singing now in a rich contralto voice a valse which she played with an exaggerated sweep of sentimentality. From the peak of her hard and cynical intelligence, she mocked the song. She sang,

"O, la troublante volupté
de la première etreinte
qu'on risque avec timidité
et presque avec contrainte
Le contact vous fait frissonner. . . ."

In a wild burst of mocking laughter, the song came abruptly to an end. The shattered chords floated out into the garden where Lily sat leaning against the laburnum tree, silent and thoughtful, her eyes filled with sorrow and wonder. She was in that moment more beautiful than she had ever been before . . . a symbol of that which is above all else eternal, which knows no bonds, which survives cities and mills and even nations, which is in itself the beginning and end of all things, without which the world itself must fail.

And presently, far down among the plane trees, the gate in the high wall swung gently open and, against the distant lights of the Rue de Passy, the figure of the white haired M. de Cyon came into the garden.

THE END

❧ ❧ ❧ POSSESSION ❧ ❧ ❧

To
MARY

"Life is hard for our children. It isn't as simple as it was for us. Their grandfathers were pioneers and the same blood runs in their veins, only they haven't a frontier any longer. They stand—these children of ours—with their backs toward this rough-hewn middle west and their faces set toward Europe and the East and they belong to neither. They are lost somewhere between."

• • • •

"Wherever she goes, trouble will follow. She's born like most people with a touch of genius, under a curse. She is certain to affect the lives of every one about her . . . because, well, because the threads of our lives are hopelessly tangled. . . . Marry her if you will, but don't expect happiness to come of it. She would doubtless bear you a son . . . a fine strong son, because she's a fine cold animal. But don't expect satisfaction from her. She knows too well exactly where she is bound."

FOREWORD

"Possession" is in no sense a sequel to "The Green Bay Tree." The second novel does not carry the fortunes of the characters which appeared in the first; it reveals, speaking chronologically, little beyond the final page of the earlier book. On the contrary both novels cover virtually the same period of time, from the waning years of the nineteenth century up to the present time. The two are what might be called panel novels in a screen which, when complete, will consist of at least a half-dozen panels all interrelated and each giving a certain phase of the ungainly, swarming, glittering spectacle of American Life.

Those who read "The Green Bay Tree" must have felt that one character—that of Ellen Tolliver—was thrust aside in order to make way for the progress of Lily Shane. With the publication of the present novel, it is possible to say that the energetic Miss Tolliver was neglected for two reasons; first, because she was a character of such violence that, once given her way, she would soon have dominated all the others; second, because the author kept her purposely in restraint, as he desired to tell her story in proportions worthy of her.

In Ellen's story, the author, knowing that much which pertains to the life of a musician is boring and of little interest to any one outside the realm of music, has endeavored to eliminate all the technical side of her education. He does this not because he lacks knowledge of the facts but because they are in themselves uninteresting. Ellen Tolliver might have been a sculptor, a painter, an actress, a writer; the interest in her lies not in the calling she chose but in the character of the woman herself. She would, doubtless, have been successful in any direction she saw fit to direct her boundless energy.

❧ ❧ ❧ FOREWORD ❧ ❧ ❧

"Possession" is the second of several novels in which familiar characters will reappear and new ones will make their entrance.

L. B.

Cold Spring Harbor

May 1, 1925

Long Island.

POSSESSION

I

IN the fading October twilight Grandpa Tolliver sat eating an apple and reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The ponderous book (volume III) lay spread open upon his bony knees, for it was too heavy to be supported in any other way, and he read by leaning far over and peering at the pages through steel rimmed spectacles which were not quite clear, as they never were. The dimness of lens, however, did not appear to annoy him; undisturbed he read on as if the spectacles sharpened his vision instead of dimming it. Things were, after all, what you believed them to be; therefore the spectacles served their purpose. He was not one to be bothered by such small things. . . .

The room in which he sat was square and not too large. On two sides there were windows and in one corner an enormous and funereal bed of black walnut (the nuptial bed of three generations in the Tolliver family) which bore at the moment the imprint of the perverse and angular old body. He had lain there to think. Sometimes he lay thus for hours at a time in a sort of coma, ruminating the extraordinary and imbecile diversity of life. But it was the number of books which contributed the dominating characteristic of the room. There was row upon row of them rising from floor to ceiling, rows added year by year out of Grandpa's infinitesimal income until at last they had walled him in. There were books bound in fine leather and books in cheap leather, worn and frayed at the corners, books in cheap boards and an immense number of books bound in yellow paper.

Pressed close against the books on the north wall of the room there stood an enormous desk of the same funereal black walnut—a desk filled with innumerable pigeonholes into which had been stuffed without order or sequence bits of paper scribbled over with a handwriting that was fine and erratic like the tracks of a tiny bird strayed into an inkpot. The papers ranged through every variety of shade from the yellowish bisque of ancient documents to the gray white of comparatively new ones. Of all the room it was the desk alone that had an appearance of untidiness; it lay under a pall of dust save for two small spots rubbed clean by the sharp elbows of Grandpa Tolliver.

What did he write? What was contained in this immense collection of documents? No one knew that; not even the curiosity of his daughter-in-law Hattie, who entered the room each morning to throw open the windows (an action he detested) and force the old man out into the chill air of the streets, had been able to penetrate the mysteries of the extraordinary bird tracks. A word with luck, here or there . . . Nothing more. And she had examined them often enough in a fierce effort to penetrate the secret of his strength. From years of breathless, headlong writing the words had lost all resemblance to combinations of letters. The letters themselves were obscured; they flowed into one another until each one, in the fashion of the Chinese, had become a symbol, a mystery to which the old man alone held the key. It was the writing of a man whose pen had never been able to keep pace with the lightning speed of his thoughts. It may have been that the old man himself could not have deciphered the writing on those sheets which long since had turned to a yellow bisque. So far as any one could discover, he never took them from the pigeonholes and read them a second time. They were simply thrust away to turn yellow and gather dust, for Grandpa Tolliver had suffered for years from a sense of the immense futility of everything.

As he sat in the fading light in his decrepit rocking chair the appearance of the old man struck faintly a note of the sinister.

Something in the shape of his great, bony head, in the appearance of his unkempt gray beard, in the remarkable angularity of his lean body gave him the appearance of one in alliance with the powers of darkness. The peculiar gray green of his glittering eyes had a way of piercing through pretense, through barriers of reserve and secrecy. They were the eyes of one who knew far too much. They were the eyes that got somehow at the core of things, so that a person—even his bitterest enemy, the vigorous and unsubtle Hattie—winced before the shattering light that gathered in their depths. They looked out from under shaggy brows with a knowledge bred of solitude that was something more than human. And he had a terrible way of using them, of watching people, of silently and powerfully prying open their shells. For Grandpa Tolliver there were no longer any illusions; he was therefore a horrid and intolerable old man.

At length when the light grew too dim even for the unearthly eyes of the old man, he closed *The Decline and Fall* and devoted himself to finishing his apple, absorbed for the time being in reflecting triumphantly upon passages in the ponderous work which proved without any doubt that the human race lay beyond the possibility of improvement.

When his strong pointed teeth had finished with the apple, he cast it aside for Hattie to sweep out in the morning and, lifting *The Decline and Fall* as high as possible, he dropped it to the floor with a resounding crash. As the echo died there rose from belowstairs the sound of clattering pans shaken by the crash from the startled hands of Hattie, and then an inarticulate rumble of exasperation at this latest bit of minute deviltry.

The old man leaned back in his chair and chuckled, wickedly. It was one more skirmish in the state of war which had existed between him and his daughter-in-law over a period of years.

Through the closed window the homely sounds of a dozen backyards filtered into the room . . . the sharp slam of a refrigerator door, the sudden mad barking of a dog playing with a

child, the faint whicker of a horse in one of the stables and then the sound of Hattie's vigorous voice, still carrying a persistent, unmistakable note of irritation, summoning her small sons from the far reaches of the neighborhood.

The sound of the voice rose and hung in the autumn night, rich, full-blooded, vigorous, redolent of energy, beautiful in its primitive strength. At the faint note of irritation Grandpa Tolliver, rubbing his teeth with a skinny finger, chuckled again.

The voice wavered, penetrating the remote distances of the back yards, and presently there came an answering cry in the shrill, high treble of a boy of twelve arrested suddenly in the midst of his play.

"Yay-us! Yay-us! We're coming!"

Primitive it was, like a ewe calling to her lambs, or more perhaps (thought the old man) like a lioness summoning her cubs. It was Robert who answered, the younger of the two. It was difficult for Fergus to yell in the same lusty fashion; his voice had reached the stage where it trembled perilously between a treble and a bass. The sounds he made shamed him. Fergus, like his father, disliked making a spectacle of himself. (Too sensitive, thought Grandpa Tolliver. Like his father he would be a failure in life, because he had no indifference.)

The room grew darker and after a time the sweet, acrid odor of smoldering leaves, stirred into flame by the children who played beneath the window, drifted through the cracks in the glass. As if the scent, the soft twilight, the sound of Hattie's voice, had set fire to a train of memories, Grandpa Tolliver began to rock gently. The chair made a faint squeaking sound which filled the room as if it had been invaded by a flock of bats which, circling wildly above the old man's head, uttered a chorus of faint shrill cries. . . . The old man chuckled again. It was a bitter, unearthly sound. . . .

The room in which Grandpa Tolliver sat had been added to

the Tolliver house during one of those rare intervals, years ago, when his son had prospered for a time. The house itself stood back from the street in the older part of a town which within a generation had changed from a frontier settlement into a bustling city whose prosperity centered about the black mills and the flaming furnaces of a marshy district known as The Flats, a district black and unsightly and inhabited by hordes of Italians, Poles, Slovaks and Russians who never emerged from its sooty environs into the clear air of the Hill where the old citizens had their homes. Among these houses the Tollivers' was marked by the need of paint, though this shameful fault was concealed somewhat by masses of vines—roses, honeysuckle, ivy—which overran all the dwelling and in summer threw a cloud of beauty over the horrid, imaginative trimmings conceived by some side-whiskered small town architect of the eighties. There was in the appearance of the house nothing of opulence. It was gray, commonplace and ornamented with extravagant jigsaw decorations. Also it suffered from a slate roof of a depressing shade of blue gray. But it was roomy and comfortable.

Houses occupied for a long period by the same family have a way of taking on imperceptibly but surely the characteristics of their owners. The Tollivers, Hattie and Charles, had come into the house as bride and bridegroom, in the days when Charles Tolliver had before him a bright future, years before he gave up, at the urging of his powerful wife, a commonplace adequate salary for a more reckless and extravagant career in the politics of the growing county. By now, twenty years after, the house, the lawn and the garden expressed the essence of the Tolliver family. The grass sometimes went in grave need of cutting. The paint had peeled here and there where it lay exposed to the middle-western winter. At the eaves there were streaks of black made by soot which drifted from the roaring Mills in the distant Flats. The shrubs were unpruned and the climbing roses would have been improved by a little cutting; yet these things,

taken all in all, produced an effect of charm far greater than any to be found in the other neat, painted, monotonous houses that stood in unspectacular rows on either side of Sycamore Street. In the careless growth of the shrubs and vines there was a certain wildness and inspiring vigor, something full-blooded and lush which elsewhere in the block was absent. There was nothing ordered, pruned or clipped into a state of patterned mediocrity. Here, within the hedge that enclosed the Tolliver property there reigned a marked abandon, a sense of life lived recklessly with a shameless disregard for snug security. The Tollivers clearly had no time for those things which lay outside the main current.

Yet there was no rubbish in evidence. The whole was spotlessly clean from the linden trees which stood by the curb to the magenta-colored stable at the end of the garden. You might have walked the length of the block without consciousness of the other houses; but in front of the Tollivers' you would have halted, thinking, "Here is a difference indeed. Some careless householder without proper pride in his grounds!"

Yet you would have stopped to notice it. At least it would have interested you by the wild, vigorous, disheveled character of its difference.

In the beginning the room which Gramp occupied had been built for a servant and through its doors, in the spasmodic periods of Tolliver prosperity, had passed a procession of weird and striking "hired girls" . . . country maidens come to town in search of excitement, Bohemian and Russian girls, the offspring of the Flat-dwellers; one or two who had been, to Hattie's shocked amazement, simply daughters of joy. With the passing of Myrtle, the last of these, who was retired in order to bear a child of uncertain paternity, the Tollivers' ship of fortune had slipped into one of the periodical doldrums and the stormy, unsatisfactory era of the hired girl came to an end forever. Almost as if he had divined the event, Grandpa Tolliver appeared on

the same day seated beside the driver on a wagon laden with books, to announce that he had come to take up his abode with the family of his son. There was nothing to be done. The books were moved into the room above the kitchen and there the old man settled himself. He had been there now for ten years, a gadfly to torment the virtuous, bustling existence of his daughter-in-law. He seldom stirred from his room. He had, indeed, done nothing in all his life which might be scored under the name of accomplishment. As a young man he had been trained for the church, but when his education had been completed, he discovered that he had learned too much and so believed nothing. He bothered no one. His crime was inertia. He possessed an indifference of colossal proportions.

As the room fell into a thick blackness, the rocking chair, under the urge of flooding memories, acquired a greater animation. It may have been that there was something in the homely sounds of the backyard vista and the pleasant smell of burning leaves that pierced by way of his senses the wall of the old man's impregnable solitude. Presently he chuckled again in a triumphant fashion, as if the memory of Hattie Tolliver's irritation still rang in his ears.

Ah, how she hated him! How they all scorned him! Even on his rare and solitary ramblings along the sidewalks of the Town, prosperous citizens regarded him with hostile looks. "Old Man Tolliver . . . The Failure!" They pointed him out to their children as the awful example of a man without ambition, a man who drifted into a lonely and desolate old age, abhorred and unwanted, a burden to his own children and grandchildren. That's what came of not having energy and push!

Old Man Tolliver . . . The Failure! At the thought, the wicked old man chortled more loudly than ever. Failure! Failure! What did they know of whether he was a failure or not. Failure! That was where he had the joke on the lot of them. He

alone had fixed his ambition, captured his ideal; he had done always exactly what he wanted to do.

In sudden satisfaction over his secret triumph the old man was very nearly overcome by his own chuckling.

Old? Yes, he felt very old to-night. Perhaps he hadn't many years before him. Maybe it was only a matter of months. Then he would die. What was it like to die? Just a passing out probably, into something vast and dark. Oblivion! That was it. Why wasn't that the ideal end? Oblivion, where you were nothing and had no mind and no memory and no books, where you simply did not exist. Just nothingness and eternal peace. Aratu, that kingdom where reigned mere oblivion. He wasn't looking forward to Heaven and harps. (Imagine Hattie strumming a harp!) He was filled with a sense of great completeness, of having done everything there was to do, of having known all of life that it was possible for one man to know. Sin? What was sin? He didn't regret anything he had done. He had no remorse, no regrets. On the contrary he was glad of all the things he had done which people called sin. It gave him a satisfactory feeling of completeness. Now when he was so old, he needn't wish he had done this or done that. He had. To be sure, he hadn't murdered any one! He hadn't been guilty of theft. It was very satisfactory . . . that feeling of completeness.

Nothing remained. Death . . . Deadness . . . Why he was dead already. Death must be like this room, blank, dark, negative, neither one thing nor the other. He had been dead for weeks, for months, for years; and here he was walled up in a tomb of books. "La Pucelle" (a rare edition). What would become of it? Like as not Hattie would burn it, never knowing its value. Think how she would suffer if ever she discovered she had burned up a great pile of banknotes! Candide, The Critique of Pure Reason, Spinoza, Montaigne, Darwin, Huxley. (What a row they'd caused! How well he remembered the chatter.) Plato. And there was Verlaine and George Sand and all of Thackeray. Colonel Newcome and Rebecca Sharp with her

pointed nose and green eyes. What an amusing creature she was! Amelia Sedley, that tiresome, uninteresting, virtuous bore! And Charles Honeyman. (Ah! He knew things they didn't dream of in this town!) And there in the corner by the old desk, Emma Bovary tearing voluptuously at her bodice.

But they were not all ghosts of books. There were ghosts too of reality, ghosts born of memories, which came dimly out of the past, out of a youth that, dried now at its source, had been hot-blooded and romantic and restless; such ghosts as one called Celeste (in a poke bonnet with a camelia pinned just above the brim) who seemed forever peeping round the corner of a staircase as she had once peeped, in a glowing reality round the corner of a staircase in the Rue de Clichy. Nina who was more alive now than she had ever been. . . . And they thought him a failure!

Yes, they were amusing ghosts. He had lived with them so many years. Lonely? How was it possible to be lonely among such fascinating companions? He had lived with them too long. He knew them too well, inside and out. They kept him company in this tomb of books. He seldom left it. Once a week, perhaps, to walk around the block; and then the children ran from him as if they saw the Devil himself.

Grandpa Tolliver began to rock more gently now. Yes, he'd been wicked enough. He'd known everything there was to know and didn't regret it. They shut him up in this room and didn't address him for days at a time, but he had Emma Bovary and Becky Sharp to amuse him; and Celeste who belonged to him alone. Grandpa Barr didn't even have them. His children had left him—all but his daughter Hattie—to go to Iowa, to Oregon, to Wyoming, always toward the open country. Your friends might die and your children might go away, but your memories couldn't desert you, nor such friends as Emma and Becky.

Outside it began presently to rain, at first slowly with isolate, hesitating drops, and then more and more steadily until at last the whole parched earth drank up the autumn downpour.

IN the sound of rain falling through soft darkness there is a healing quality of peace. Its persistence—the very effortless unswerving rhythm of the downpour—have the power of engulfing the spirit in a kind of sensuous oblivion. Even upon one of so violent and unreflective a nature as Ellen Tolliver, one so young, so impatient and so moody, the sound of the autumn rain falling on the roof and in the parched garden had its effect. It created a music of its own, delicate yet primitive, abundant of the richness of earth and air, so that presently in a room a dozen feet from her grandfather, Ellen stopped sobbing and buried her face in the pillow of her great oak bed, soothed, peaceful, and presently in the darkness of her room she lay at last silent and still, her dark hair tossed and disheveled against the white of the pillowcase. She lay thus in a solitude of her own, separated only by the thinness of a single wall from the solitude in which her grandfather sat enveloped. If the sound of her sobbing had been audible, there was another wall that would have stopped it . . . the wall of warm autumn rain that beat upon the earth and shut her away from all the world.

She knew no reason for this outburst of weeping. If there had been a reason she would not have locked herself in her room to weep until she had no more tears. She could not say, "I weep because some one has been unkind to me," or "I weep because I have suffered a sudden disappointment." She wept because she could not help herself; because she had been overcome by a mood that was at once melancholy and heroic, sad yet luxuriously sensuous. After a fashion, her weeping gave her pleasure. Now that the sound of the rain had quieted her, she lay bathing her soul in the darkness. Somehow it protected her. Here in a locked room where no splinter of light penetrated, she was for a little time completely herself. That was the great thing. . . . She was *herself*. . . . There was no one about her. . . . Some-

times this same triumphant aloofness came to her from music. . . . It too was able to set her apart where she was forced to share nothing of herself with any one. In the darkness people couldn't pry their way into your soul. All this she understood but vaguely, with the understanding of a sensitive girl who has not learned to search her own soul. And this understanding she kept to herself. None knew of it. The face she showed to the world betrayed nothing of loneliness, of wild and turbulent moods, of fierce exasperation. To the world she was a girl very like other girls, rather more hasty and bad-tempered perhaps, but not vastly different—a girl driven alone by a wild vague impulse hidden far back in the harassed regions of her impatient soul. It is one of the tragedies of youth that it feels and suffers without understanding.

For an hour she lay quite still listening to the rain; and at the end of that time, hearing sounds from below stairs which forecast the arrival of supper, she rose and lighted the gas bracket above her dressing table.

At the first pin point of flame, the world of darkness and rain vanished and in its place, as if by some abracadabra, there sprang into existence the hard, definite walls of a room, square and commonplace, touched with quaint efforts to create an illusion of beauty. The walls were covered with wall paper bearing a florid design of lattices heavily laden with red roses on anemic stalks. Two Gibson pictures, faithfully copied by an admirer, hung on either side of the oak dresser. They were "The Eternal Question" and "The Queen of Hearts." The bed, vast and ugly, and still bearing in the white counterpane the imprint of Ellen's slim young body, fitted the room as neatly as a canal barge fits a lock. The chairs varied in type from an old arm chair of curly maple, brought across the mountains into the middle-west by Ellen's great-grandfather and now relegated to the bedroom, to a damaged patent rocker upholstered in red plush with yellow tassels. On the top of the dressing table lay a cover made elaborately of imitation Valenciennes and fine cam.

bric, profusely ornamented by bow knots of pink baby ribbon.

By the flickering light, the girl arranged her hair before the mirror. It was dark, heavy, lustrous hair with deep blue lights. Hastily tossing it into a pompadour over a wire rat, she washed her eyes with cold water to destroy the redness. She was preparing the face she showed the world. It was not a beautiful face though it had its points. It was too long perhaps and the nose was a trifle prominent; otherwise it was a pleasant face, with large dark eyes, fine straight lips and a really beautiful chin. It held the beginnings of a beauty that was fine and proud. The way the chin and throat leapt from her shoulders was a thing at which to marvel. The line was clear, triumphant, determined. Even Ellen was forced to admire it. What she lacked in beauty was amply compensated by the interest which her face inspired. The pompadour, to be sure, was ridiculous. It was but a week or two old, the sign of her emancipation from the estate of a little girl.

For a long time she studied the reflection in the mirror. This way and that she turned her proud head, admiring all the while the line of the throat and tilted chin. It delighted her as music sometimes delighted her, with a strange leaping sensation of triumph over people about her.

She thought, "Am I to be great one day? Am I to be famous? Is it written in my face? I will be or die . . . I must be!"

Early in the afternoon, before the long rain settled in for the night, she had walked out of Miss Ogilvie's little house down the brick path under the elms with a heart singing in triumph. Before she arrived home, the sense of triumph had faded a little, and by the time she reached her room it was gone altogether, submerged by a wave of despair. It seemed that her triumph only made life more difficult; instead of being an end it was only a beginning. It created the most insuperable difficulties, the most perilous and agitating problems.

Miss Ogilvie lived in a weathered old house that withdrew

from the street behind a verdant bulwark of lilacs, syringas, and old apple trees abounding in birds,—wrens, blackbirds, finches and robins. In the warm season, as if the wild birds were not enough, a canary or two and a pair of love-birds hung suspended from the roof of the narrow piazza high above the scroll-work of the jig-saw rail. There were those who believed that Miss Ogilvie, in some earlier incarnation, was herself a bird . . . a wren perhaps, or a song sparrow flitting in and out of hedges and tufts of grass, shaking its immaculate tail briskly in defiance of a changing world.

When she sat in her big rocker listening to the horrible exercises of her pupils, she resembled a linnet on a swaying bough. She rocked gently as if she found the motion soothing to some wildness inside her correct and spinsterish little body. Always she rocked, perhaps because it helped her to endure the horrible renderings of Schumann and Mendelssohn by the simpering daughters and the sullen sons of the baker, the butcher, the candlestick maker. For Miss Ogilvie understood music and she was sensitive enough. In her youth, before her father failed in the deluge that followed the Civil War, she had been abroad. She had heard music, real music, in her day. In all the Town she and Grandpa Tolliver alone knew what real music could be. She had even studied for a time in Munich where she lived in her birdlike way in a well chaperoned *pension*. The other girls fluttered too, for in her day women were all a little birdlike; it was a part of their training.

In the early afternoon when Ellen Tolliver came for her weekly lesson, Miss Ogilvie, dressed in a tight-fitting basque of purple poplin ornamented with pins of coral and cameo, received her formally into the little drawing-room where she lived in a nest of pampas grass, conch shells, raffia baskets, and spotless bits of bric-a-brac. There was in the reception nothing unusual; Miss Ogilvie permitted herself no relaxation, even in the privacy of her own bed-chamber. She remained a lady, elegantly so, who supported herself in a genteel fashion by giving music les-

sons. But with Ellen a certain warmth and kindliness, seldom to be found in her contact with other pupils, occasionally tempered the formality. To-day her manner carried even a hint of respect.

Ellen sat at the upright piano and played. She played with a wild emotionalism unhampered by problems of technique. She poured her young, rebellious soul into the music until the ebony piano rocked and the ball-fringe of the brocade piano-cover swayed. Miss Ogilvie sat in her big rocking chair in a spot of sunlight and listened. It was significant that she did not rock. She sat quite still, her tiny feet barely touching the floor, her thin blue-veined hands lying quietly like little birds at rest in her purple poplin lap. The canaries too became still and listened. A hush fell upon the garden.

"And now," said Miss Ogilvie, when Ellen paused for a moment, "some Bach," and the girl set off into the tortuous, architectural beauties of a fugue. She played without notes, her eyes closed a little, her body swaying with a passionate rhythm which arose from something far more profound than the genteel precepts of Miss Ogilvie. It was savage. It must have terrified the gentle little old woman, for she knew that to play Bach savagely was sacrilege. And yet . . . somehow it didn't matter, when Ellen did it. There was in the music a smoldering, disturbing magnificence.

Then she played some Chopin, delicately, poetically; and at last she finished and turned about on the piano stool to await the criticism of her teacher.

Miss Ogilvie said nothing. Her blue eyes winked a bit in embarrassment and down one withered cheek ran a tear which had escaped her dignity and self-possession. The sunlight flickered across her thin hands, and presently she stirred.

"My child," she said, "there is nothing for me to say."

And Ellen's heart leapt so suddenly that she grew faint with joy.

"I no longer count for anything," said Miss Ogilvie gently. "You are beyond me. . . ." She smiled suddenly and dabbed her

eyes politely. "Who am I to instruct you? My child, you are an artist. You frighten me!" She leaned forward a little, confidently, and whispered. "It happens like that . . . in the most unexpected places, in villages, in ugly towns . . . why, even in a dirty mill town like this."

Between the two there was a bond, a thing which neither ever mentioned but which, in the silence that followed Miss Ogilvie's undignified outburst, took possession of both and drew them together. Both scorned the Town, a treason which none had discovered; and now when Miss Ogilvie spoke again she dragged the secret bond into the glaring light of day.

"Artists occur," she said, "without respect for places." And then after a little pause . . . "But you must never let any one here suspect you're an artist. It would make you unhappy." Recovering herself a little she began again to rock gently. "For a long time I've known you were escaping me. . . . It was no use hiding it from myself. . . . I know it now. . . ."

She smiled triumphantly a withered, rosy smile, a bit like the smile one might see on the bright face of a lady apple, and began pulling at the lace on her handkerchief. "It's wonderful," she said, "to think I have discovered it. . . . Poor me! But you must work, Ellen, there are hard days ahead . . . harder than you guess.

"D'you know?" she continued, in her excitement leaning forward once more, "when I was a girl, I played well . . . I was like you . . . not so independent, not so strong, because I was always a little woman . . . even then," she added as if she were conscious that age had shriveled her. "Sometimes I thought I would like to be a great pianist . . . a great artist. . . . But women didn't do such things in my day. My father would never have listened to it for a moment. It wasn't a ladylike thing to do. It was like being a circus rider. He let me take lessons so that I could play in the drawing-room and accompany my young men when they sang. My father even let me study in Munich, but when he found out I was more interested in music than in

young men . . . he brought me home. I never got very interested in young men . . . I always liked music better."

Ellen listened respectfully, moved as much by her feeling for Miss Ogilvie in the rôle of a friend as by her respect for older people in general. She was carefully brought up and had good manners. But, secretly, the tale bored her a little. There was nothing interesting in it, nothing to seize one's imagination, nothing to soothe her impatience, nothing which fed that wild ambition. All that Miss Ogilvie told her had happened so long ago.

"I suppose I ought to have got married," continued Miss Ogilvie. "But I waited too long. . . . I had chances!" she added proudly, "good ones. . . . Maybe I would have been happier today. . . . I don't know, though," she added doubtfully, puckering her withered lips as if she could come to no decision in the matter. "There's so much to be said on both sides. But what I mean to say is, that you must go ahead. . . . You mustn't let anything stop you. . . . It's easier now than it was in my day. At least there's no one to oppose you. . . . It's a gift that doesn't come to every one. . . . You see I didn't marry and I didn't become an artist." And a note of wistfulness entered her voice. "So now I'm just an old spinster who gives music lessons. Maybe," she said, "you can manage both. I don't know . . . and you don't. . . . But don't let anything stop you. . . . Don't die without having done what you wanted to do. There's no more for me to tell you. . . . I can teach you nothing, but I hope you'll come sometimes and play for me. . . . I'd like it."

By the time she finished Miss Ogilvie's eyes were again bright with tears, as much from pity of herself as in a benevolent envy of the impetuous Ellen's youth and independence.

"It won't be easy. . . ." the girl said presently. "There's my mother. . . . She thinks I ought to get married. . . . She had me take music lessons because she thought it would make me more marriageable if I could play the piano. . . . Of course she's proud that I play so well. She's proud of anything I can do."

"Perhaps she'll come round," suggested Miss Ogilvie. "But it'll be a struggle. . . . I know your mother, Ellen. . . . She's made you ambitious. . . . That's where she made a mistake." She coughed suddenly with embarrassment. "But I don't want to interfere. She's your own mother. . . . It's for her to decide." And Miss Ogilvie abased herself and her high hopes for Ellen before the altar of her generation's respect for the position of a mother.

"And there's no money. . . ." said Ellen sullenly. "There never is."

"Perhaps we could work that out . . . I could let you take some of the pupils . . . I have too many now . . . I'd be willing to help . . . to sacrifice if necessary." It was clear that Miss Ogilvie meant to say nothing directly; she had no desire to be responsible for the actions of the impetuous girl. Yet she continued to hint, to imply that she would do her part if a crisis arose.

"I want to," said Ellen, "I want to more than anything in the world. . . . I want to be great and famous. . . . I've got to be." She became so savage, so intense that in her great rocking chair Miss Ogilvie trembled.

At last Ellen put on her hat, which perched well up on the absurd pompadour, bade Miss Ogilvie good-by, and went out to the piazza where her bicycle rested against the fancy railing under the cages of the canaries and love-birds. As she turned down the brick path, the voice of Miss Ogilvie followed her.

"If the chance comes," she said, "look to me. I'll do what I can to help you." The words came out in little gasps as if she were unable to keep them—bold though they were—imprisoned any longer. Ellen smiled back at her over her shoulder and the old lady retired into the weathered house.

As Ellen pedaled over the brick streets between rows of maple trees, her delight faded slowly before the assaults of her com-

mon sense. In these skirmishes, wild hope and inspiration went down in defeat. There were too many obstacles . . . poverty, prejudice, even her own sense of provinciality. Yet underneath a little voice kept saying, "You'll do it . . . you'll do it. . . . Nothing can stop you. You'll be able to get what you want if you want it hard enough."

And by the time she turned into the block where the Tolliver family lived, clinging like grim death to a respectability which demanded a brave face turned toward the world, her mind began once more to work in its secret way, planning how it would be possible.

Miss Ogilvie's timid, frightened offer of help she had quite forgotten. Miss Ogilvie was so old, so gentle, so ineffectual . . . like her own caged canaries. Ellen's mind had begun already to turn toward her cousin Lily. The glamorous Lily must know some way out.

3

IT was Lily who still dominated her thoughts when she descended at last to find her mother setting the table for the family supper. This was an operation into which Mrs. Tolliver threw all the great energy and force of her character. It was impossible for her to do things easily; the placing of each fork involved as much precision, as much thoroughness and intensity as the building of a bridge or a skyscraper. It was the gesture of an ardent housekeeper burning incense before the Gods of Domesticity, the abandoned devotion of an artist striving for perfection.

For an instant Ellen stood in the doorway watching her mother as if somewhere in the recesses of her clever brain she considered this parent as she might consider a stranger, marking the woman's strong face, her vigorous black hair, the rosiness of her healthy

cheeks. Ellen, her mother said, had a disconcerting way of studying people, of prying into their lives, even of imagining things about them that could not possibly have been true. This was exactly what Ellen did as she waited in the doorway. She regarded silently the figure that stood before her, swathed in durable serge and ornamented with a gold chain and a tiny Swiss watch out of all proportion with the size and vigor of her body.

Then suddenly Mrs. Tolliver became aware of her daughter's presence. She straightened her back and stood with the knives and forks poised in her hand beneath the glare of the ornate chandelier.

"Well," she said. "You might speak when you come into a room." Then after a slight pause, "You can finish the table. I've got to watch the pies."

Listlessly the daughter took the silverware and absently she began laying it at the places to be occupied by her father, by Fergus, by Robert. There was no place for Gramp Tolliver. He ate in the solitude of his own room meals which were placed on the bottom step of the "back way" to be carried up by him in response to a loud knock on the door of his hermitage. For eight years he had eaten thus in exile.

"Ma," began Ellen, "when does Lily arrive?"

The mother continued to pour water into the shining glasses. "In a week or two . . . I don't know exactly," she said, and then raised her blue eyes to regard her daughter with a long and penetrating look. Between the two there was a sort of constant and secret warfare which went on perpetually as if, failing to understand each other, there could be no grounds between them for trust. Now Mrs. Tolliver saw nothing but the top of Ellen's dark head, secretive, silent, as she bent over the table.

"Why do you want to know?" she asked with an air of suspicion. "You've been talking a great deal about Lily lately. . . ."

"I don't know," came the evasive answer. "I like her. . . . I'd like to be like Lily some day."

Mrs. Tolliver resumed her task in silence but with an air of thoughtfulness. Again it was Ellen who broke the silence.

"I suppose there's no money . . . now that everything is settled." She put this forward tentatively, as if the matter was of no great interest to her.

"There's nothing over. . . ." replied her mother. "You knew there wouldn't be. . . . If Papa is elected, things will be all right again . . . for a time at least." This last she added with a profound sigh—a signal that at any moment consideration of the trials brought upon her by an easy-going husband might loose all the torrent of an emotional, primitive nature. "Why do you ask?"

"I just wondered," said Ellen. "I'd hoped things might be a little better."

"They won't be . . . for a time. . . ."

The significance of this conversation lay not so much in what was said as in what was not said. Neither the mother nor the daughter approached the real subject of the conversation openly. They hovered about it, descending for a time on the edge of it, flitting away again coyly, with backward glances. The fault may have been Ellen's. Certainly the ways of the honest, emotional Mrs. Tolliver were neither dark nor devious. Presently the mother made an effort to strike at the heart of the situation.

"I wish," she said, "that you would settle down and be content, Ellen. . . . I thought you were better for a time. . . . What is it you want? Is it to go away just when you're old enough to be a comfort to me? Is that the reward a mother has for her care and sacrifices? That she loses her only daughter as soon as she is old enough to think she is grown up?"

She was slipping into one of the most unbearable of her emotional moods, a mood of self-pity, when she threw herself as the Pope before the Visigoths upon the mercy of her husband and children. All the signs of its approach were at hand—the pathos, the slightly theatrical tone. The mood was aggravating because

fundamentally it was reasonable. You could not argue the rightness of her position. She had sacrificed everything for her husband and her children. Day by day she continued to sacrifice everything. She would go on sacrificing herself until she died. She would have given her life for them without a regret. To wait upon her amiable unsuccessful husband and her three superlatively wonderful children was her idea of love, of perfect service. They were her world, her life, the beginning, the very core, the end of her passionate existence. The only reward she asked was possession; they must belong to her always.

And then it struck Ellen suddenly that the position of the mother was pitiable. It was pitiable because she knew so little of what was in her daughter's heart . . . so precious little of all the things stirring there so wildly, so savagely. She could never know, at least until after it was done—whatever it was that was to be done. Even then she could not understand that there were stronger things than love, things which were more profound and more important.

"And why are you so interested in Lily?" began her mother. "Why do you say you want to be like her?"

"I don't know," replied Ellen in a low voice. "I don't know except that I don't want to be like the others."

Her mother considered her for a moment and then shook her head, as if silently she had reached a decision.

"I can't understand your restlessness," she said. "I don't know where you get it."

Ellen stood now leaning against the mantelpiece above the gas log. Outside the rain still fell heavily.

"Well," she said, "it's not my fault that one grandfather ran away from home as a boy and went to California to dig gold . . . And it's not my fault that the other left his wife and ran away to live in Europe for thirteen years."

Mrs. Tolliver turned sharply. "Who told you that? I mean about your grandfather Tolliver."

Ellen smiled in her silent, proud way. "I'm not deaf, Mama, nor blind. . . . I've been about the house now for nearly nineteen years. I know about Gramp Tolliver."

Again Ellen was smitten by amazement at her mother's ignorance of how much she knew, at how little the older woman understood of the shrewd knowledge she had hoarded away.

"I'm sorry you know it," said Mrs. Tolliver. "It would have been just as well if you hadn't known." Again she nodded her head with that same air of reaching a secret decision. "But now that you know it, you might as well know some other things. . . . You're old enough now, I guess." She sat down on one of the stiff-backed chairs and beckoned to her daughter. "Come here," she said, "and sit on my lap. . . . I'll tell you other things."

Ellen came to her and sat upon her lap, rather awkwardly, for to her it seemed a silly thing. She had not the faintest understanding of all that this small gesture meant to her mother. And secretly she hardened herself against a treacherous attack upon her affections. It was the habit of her mother to attack her through love. Always it had been a sure method of reducing Ellen's fortress of secrecy and hardness.

"It's about Lily," began Mrs. Tolliver. "I know Lily is beautiful. She's very kind and pleasant . . . but there are things about her that aren't nice. In some ways Lily is a loose woman. . . . She's laid herself open to talk. . . . People smirch her good name. . . . Perhaps she isn't really bad. . . . Nobody really *knows* anything against her, but she is free with men. . . . There's been talk, Ellen, and when there's smoke, there's fire."

Here Ellen interrupted her. "I don't believe it. . . . I don't believe any of it," she exclaimed stubbornly. "It's the way people talk. I know how they do. . . . I've heard. . . . It's one reason why I hate the Town."

And then Ellen saw her mother assume a great calmness, deliberately and with a certain ostentation, in order to impress Ellen with her sense of justice. It was like taking a cloak from a

closet and putting it gravely about her. "I've never mentioned it to any one," she said (never once guessing the thoughts in her daughter's mind), "not to a soul. . . . Nothing could induce me to. . . . After all, Lily is my first cousin, the daughter of Aunt Julia, my own mother's sister. . . . I wouldn't permit any one to befoul her name in my presence. . . . But here we are alone, together, you and I. . . . It's in the family. That makes a difference. . . . Sometimes, in the family, one has to face the facts. And the facts are that Lily hasn't behaved well. . . . She's lived in Paris for years, alone in the wickedest city in the world. . . . There's even talk about her having had a baby . . . and she's never been married. . . . Nobody knows . . . and Aunt Julia wouldn't tell me. . . . You can't get a word out of her. . . . You wouldn't want to be like that, now would you?"

Ellen fell to pleating the folds of her cheap dress. Her dark brows drew closer together. She was sullen, awkward.

"I don't see that it makes any difference . . . not to Lily. She's free. . . . She's happy."

"But she's rich," said her mother. "That's why she's free . . . and only God knows whether she's happy. . . . A woman like that can't be happy. . . . I don't want my daughter, my pure, lovely little daughter to be contaminated."

The tide of Mrs. Tolliver's emotions displayed all the signs of bursting the dam of her restraint. Ellen knew these signs. Her mother was beginning to drag in God. She was beginning to use words like "pure," and "lovely." And for the first time in her life, Ellen found herself instead of softening, growing harder and harder. Strangely enough, it was the words of the gentle, birdlike Miss Ogilvie which gave her a new power. This time, she was not to be defeated.

"Well, it doesn't make any difference," she said, rising from her mother's lap. "I like Lily better than any one in this town . . . I always will . . . and nothing can change me." The fine line of her young chin grew stubborn and there rose between mother and daughter the old impregnable wall.

It is impossible to imagine what ruse Mrs. Tolliver would have used next, impossible to calculate the depths of emotion into which she might have plunged, had she not been halted by so small a thing as the ringing of a doorbell. The sound jangled noisily through the house and Ellen, finding in it the opportunity for escape, sped away to open the door.

Outside on the doorstep, drenched, tow-headed and grinning, stood Jimmy Seton, the little brother of May Seton. In one grubby hand he held a note.

"It's from May," he grinned. "I guess it's an invitation to a party."

And without another word, he vanished like an imp into the dark wall of pouring rain.

4

THE father of May Seton was rich according to standards. He was not so wealthy as the Harrison family which owned the Mills, or as Julia Shane, Mrs. Tolliver's Aunt Julia, a great and proud lady who lived in Shane's Castle, a gloomy house, relic of a past day, which stood isolated now upon a low hill in the midst of the clamorous and ascendant Mills. There were some who said that Harvey Seton was richer than Julia Shane, but it was impossible to know. The Seton wealth was public property. The wealth of Julia Shane, except for the land which she owned, lay concealed in the vaults of banks in Paris, in New York, in Pittsburgh, in Chicago. No one could gage it; and from the old woman's mode of living, it was impossible to make any estimate. There had been a day when Shane's Castle was the great house of the Town, even of the state. Great people stopped there, politicians, artists, musicians, even a President or two. But for years now, ever since Lily went to live in Paris, the famous drawing-room, glittering with crystal and silver and glowing with tapestries and paintings, had been closed and muffled

in cheese-cloth. In the big house, beneath the unceasing fall of soot from the furnaces, Julia Shane with her spinster daughter, Irene, lived in three rooms. It was this state of affairs which led people in the Town to believe that her fortune had decreased in some mysterious way. The old woman alone knew that she could have bought up Harvey Seton, tossed his corset factory into the midst of the Atlantic Ocean and never missed the money. She lived upon the income of her income. The Town, so far as she was concerned, no longer existed.

These things played an important part in the life of the Town. No one ever tired of discussing them. It was by these standards that citizens were judged; and there were no better standards in a town which had emerged less than a century before from a complete wilderness. There was nothing unusual in them, for it is the man of property after all whom most people, in their heart of hearts, honor most profoundly.

The success of Harvey Seton was, in itself, not especially interesting. It paralleled very closely the tale of any successful middle-western manufacturer. The interest lay in what he manufactured and in his character. He was born and brought up in what people call straitened circumstances. At twenty-one he entered a pharmaceutical school and upon being graduated, started life as a clerk in a pharmacy of the Town. For eight years he lived rigorously and saved his money. He was a Methodist and attended church regularly, despising card-playing and the theater as implements of the devil. In this there is nothing unusual. It is here that the bizarre makes its appearance.

There came a day when he learned that Samuel Barr, a brother of Julia Shane and of Mrs. Tolliver's father, had invented a combination of gutta percha and steel which served as an admirable substitute for whalebone. Now Samuel Barr was always inventing something. He invented a cash-carrier, a patent rocker, and had even meddled with the idea of perpetual motion. He had invented a machine which he set up in a field on the farm of his brother-in-law, because he said the contrivance, once it was started, would

not stop until it flew into pieces of its own velocity; therefore one must have an open space about it so that no one might be injured by the flying fragments. With his brother-in-law, Colonel John Shane, he waited behind a tree for the machine to fly to bits. It revolved a few times and presently came to an abrupt halt. No fragments flew through space. The machine was a failure.

It is standing there to-day, in the midst of a field now cultivated by Bohemian immigrants. It is too bulky to be moved. It remains, like a gigantic rock, in the midst of waving corn, the single monument to Samuel Barr's inventive genius. The other things,—the cash-carrier, the patent rocker, the synthetic whalebone have survived. With a few variations they whiz coins through gigantic department stores in a hundred cities; they support the tired backs of a million exhausted housewives; and they enclose the swelling forms of even more millions of too plump women. But Samuel Barr made no money out of these things. Others made the money and stole the credit. It was the perpetual motion machine which was the apple of his eye, the great creative effort of his soul. No one wanted that, so no one stole it from him. It remained, the single possession of his trusting soul. The weather is eating it slowly away. Sometimes people stop along the road and walk into the field to regard the strange Gargantuan engine. "Sam Barr's Perpetual Motion Machine" exists, the only monument to his name.

Samuel Barr is important to this tale because it was he who founded Harvey Seton's fortune, and because it was his machine which stands as a superb symbol for the taint which ran through all his family. It was the taint of a family of great energy which had fantastic visions, which gambled high, staking everything to win or lose. It was a curious taint, rare and unhappy, but out of it there sometimes rose a sudden genius—an artist, an adventurer, a philosopher, an inventor. The taint was in all of them. His sister Julia risked her fortune a dozen times and, winning, increased it a dozen times. His niece Hattie Tolliver never ceased

to plan great undertakings which would make her husband rich. She risked her fortune a dozen times and, losing, saw it vanish into a mass of debts. His great-niece Ellen Tolliver had it strongly, though few would have suspected it. She was subtle like old Julia Shane. She told her affairs to no one.

When Harvey Seton, twenty-nine, rather pallid and ambitious in a cold-blooded fashion, heard of Samuel Barr's invention, he set about to gain possession of it. This he accomplished in time, by methods not entirely honest, at the cost of one hundred and fifty dollars. Then he secured a partner and the Eureka Reinforced Corset Factory came to raise its walls in the factory district under the windows of Shane's Castle.

In justice to Harvey Seton, it must be said that he struggled for a time with his conscience. He was not a bad man. His fault lay in a too great desire for wealth; that is to say, wealth in the abstract, for its own sake alone, and not for what it could bring to him of this world's pleasures. He had some pangs over his treatment of Samuel Barr, but they were as nothing to the pangs he endured from the nature of his enterprise. . . . A Methodist corset manufacturer might seem a contradiction in terms, a combination of two elements which are in no way soluble, the one in the other; but somehow, Harvey Seton—perhaps because he was really shrewd—managed to unite them. He continued to sing in the church choir; and, on the left hand, he manufactured corsets. He knew, no doubt, that some of the most devout of his Methodist sisters wore stays beneath their clothes. Perhaps if they had been forced to wear them on the outside, the corset business would have suffered. The world being what it is, Harvey Seton prospered. His corsets became known in remote lands for their durability and their restrictive values. Eureka Reinforced Corsets came to be worn by the great ladies of New York and London, by the housewives of the Middle West, by the demi-mondaines of Paris and Brussels, by professors' fat wives in

Germany. They were introduced at length even among the bisque ladies of Polynesia and the black ladies of brothels in Mozambique. In 1897 Harvey Seton opened a branch factory at St. Denis on the outskirts of Paris. It brought him nearer to his continental markets.

Meanwhile Harvey Seton's life followed a narrow path to and from the corset factory, and presently he married one of the plumpest of Methodist sisters who presented him after a hesitation of three years with a daughter, May. Then followed an hiatus of ten years and there appeared a thin anemic little boy. These are the facts of Harvey Seton's life. There was nothing more and nothing less. It was the thin sickly little boy, now grown precocious and somewhat spiteful, who brought the note through the pouring autumn rain to Ellen's doorstep and thus played his tiny, anemic part in the drama of her life.

But May and Ellen were friends, or as near friends as it was possible for any one to be with such a girl as Ellen. May frankly adored her. She admired her straight, slim figure, so different from her own vague softness, and her handsome dark hair. She envied her ability to play the piano. What Ellen said or believed, to May was gospel. And in this there was nothing extraordinary. It was the worship of a weak, good-natured soul for a strong, self-willed one. May was pretty in a plump, blonde, pale fashion. She giggled a great deal and liked the companionship of the Town boys. Ellen did neither of these things. In fact she hated the boys with a kind of savage resentment, as if it were presumptuous of them even to fancy they might interest her. She permitted May to worship her, since there seemed nothing to be done about it; yet the adoration annoyed her at times so profoundly that she wanted to strike the blonde, silly girl, to really hurt her, to destroy her as she might destroy some pale, stupid worm. She hated her because May had those things which would have made her own way easy. But

her pride kept her silent. She smiled at May in her cold, aloof fashion and permitted her to continue worship.

5

WHEN Ellen arrived at the Setons' on the night following the visit of Jimmy, she found that the family had not yet finished supper. They sat about the table, Seton *père* at the head, thin, bloodless, bearded, looking like one of the more austere of the saints, rather than a corset manufacturer. Seton *mère*, fat, fleshy, good-natured, occupied a seat at the far end. Between them sat disposed little Jimmy, anemic and insignificant, May plump and pale, and last of all, a stranger.

"This," said May Seton, giggling and indicating the young man at her left, "is Mr. Clarence Murdock. I've been wanting you to meet him, Ellen. I'm sure you'll like each other. He's from New York . . . here to see Papa on business."

The young man rose and bowed a little stiffly but with a flattering deference.

"May has told me so much about you . . . I'm delighted to know you."

"Sit down until we finish," said May. "We're just eating the last of our dessert."

Now May's introduction of Mr. Clarence Murdock was not altogether straightforward. From the phrases she chose, it could be gathered that it was the first time she had ever seen Mr. Murdock and that Ellen had never heard of him before. In this there was no truth for he had seen May many times. They even called each other by their Christian names. And May had given Ellen elaborately detailed descriptions of the young man, having gone even so far as to hint that there was more between them than mere friendship. But May could not resist doing

things of this sort where a man was concerned. It was impossible for her to be honest. The mere shadow of a man upon the horizon goaded her into a display of dimples and coquetry. She bridled, grew arch and mysterious. She was taught by an aspiring mother that these things were a part of a game. Ellen might have replied, "Yes, I've heard a great deal concerning you, Mr. Murdock," but she did not. She said, "I'm so glad to know you," gave him a faint smile and a look which seemed not so much concerned with Mr. Murdock as with the dead fish and boiled lobsters in the ornamental print on the wall behind him. All the same she began quietly examining the points of the stranger.

He was not bad looking and he had nice manners. To be sure he might have been taller. He was not quite so tall as Ellen. He had nice brown hair sleekly brushed back from a high forehead, and he wore a starched collar of the high, ungainly sort which was the fashion in those days. His eyes were brown and gentle and near-sighted, his face well-shaped and his nose straight, though a trifle thin so that it gave his countenance a look of insignificance which one might expect in a perpetual clerk. He was not, Ellen decided, the sort of romantic figure which could sweep her off her feet. Still, he came from New York. That was something. He had lived in the world.

"My, what a rain we've been having," observed Mrs. Seton. "I suppose it's what you'd call the equinoctial storms."

Yes, her spouse replied, it was just that. And he launched into a dissertation upon equinoctial storms, their origin, their effect, their endurance, their manifestations in various quarters of the globe,—in short all about them. Fifteen precious minutes passed beyond recall into eternity while Harvey Seton discussed equinoctial storms. No one else spoke, for it was the edict of this father that no one should interrupt him until he had exhausted his subject. He was indeed a King among Bores. And when he had finished, his wife, instead of going further with this

topic or one of similar profundity, struck out in the exasperating fashion of women upon some new and trivial tangent.

"Herman Biggs is coming in, Ellen," she observed brightly. "Right after supper." And she beamed on Ellen with the air of a great benefactress. Her thoughts were not uttered, yet to one of Ellen's shrewdness they were clear. The smile said, "Of course a poor girl like you could not aspire to a New Yorker like Mr. Murdock, but I am doing my best to see that you get a good husband. Herman Biggs is respectable and honest. He'll make a good husband. We must look higher for May. She must have something like Mr. Murdock."

And even as she spoke the doorbell rang and the anemic Jimmy sped away to open it as if on the doorstep outside stood not the freckled Herman Biggs but some wild adventure in the form of a romantic stranger.

It was Herman Biggs. He came in as he had come in a thousand times before, and stood with his dripping hat in his hand, awkwardly, while he was introduced to Mr. Clarence Murdock. But he did not sit down. The lecture upon equinoctial storms had claimed the remainder of the time allotted to dessert. The little group rose and distributed itself through the house. Mr. Seton went into a room known as his den. Mrs. Seton went into the kitchen and the young people disappeared into the cavernous parlor, followed by Jimmy, still filled with the same expectancy of stupendous adventure, intent upon harassing the little party for the rest of the evening by the sort of guerilla warfare in which he excelled.

It was a gaunt house constructed in a bad period when houses broke out into cupolas, unusual bay windows and variations of the mansard roof. Outside it was painted a liverish brown; inside the effect was the same. In the parlor there was an enormous bronze chandelier with burners constructed in imitation of the lamps found during the excavation of Pompeii, an event which

considerably agitated the world of the eighties. The walls were covered with deep red paper of a very complicated design of arabesques upon which was superimposed a second design in very elegant gold, even more complicated. Against this hung engravings of Dignity and Impudence, The Monarch of the Forest, and The Trial of Effie Deans. Pampas grass in vases ornamented with realistic pink porcelain roses, waved its dusty plumes above a bronze clock surmounted by a bronze chariot driver and horses which rushed headlong toward a collision with a porcelain rosebud. By the side of the clock stood a large conch shell bearing in gilt lettering the legend, "Souvenir of Los Angeles, Cal."

"Shall we play hearts?" asked May, with appropriate glances, "or shall we just talk? . . . There's no moon and the piazza is all wet."

Ellen said nothing; she continued to regard Mr. Murdock with a curious, speculative air.

"Let's play hearts," said the anemic Jimmy, fidgeting and climbing over the sofa. "I kin play, Mr. Murdock," he added proudly.

Upon the pride of the Seton family, Ellen turned a withering glance, charged with homicidal meaning. It said, "What are you doing here? . . . If you were my brother you'd be in bed where you belong."

"Ellen wants to play hearts! . . . Ellen wants to play hearts!" sang out Jimmy, pulling awry the shade of the imitation bronze lamp.

Herman Biggs blushed and stammered that it made no difference to him. Mr. Murdock was gentle and polite. "Let's talk," he suggested mildly, "we might as well get acquainted." As the oldest by nearly ten years and the most sophisticated by virtue of his residence in New York, he took the lead.

"I think so too," replied Ellen and a curious flash of understanding passed between them, a glance which implied a mutual superiority founded upon something deep in Ellen's nature and

upon Mr. Murdock's superior age and metropolitan bearing.

So they talked, rather stupid talk, punctuated by May's giggles, the guffaws of Herman Biggs, and the pinches of the anemic Jimmy, who was never still. Now this pale pest swung himself from the curtains, now he climbed the back of a chair, now he sought the top of the oak piano, menacing lamps and vases and pictures. And after a while Ellen was induced to sit at the piano and play for the party. It was ragtime they wanted, so she played "I'm afraid to go home in the dark" and "Bon-bon Buddy" and other favorites which Mr. Murdock sang in a pleasant baritone voice. After that he gave imitations of various vaudeville artists singing these same ballads.

At length May and Herman Biggs retired, accompanied by Jimmy, to bring in the refreshments, and Ellen was left alone with the stranger.

"I suppose," she began, "you find it dull here after New York."

Mr. Murdock coughed. "No, it's pleasant enough. . . . Mr. Seton has been very kind to me. . . . I'll be here another week or two installing the electrical equipment."

Ellen raised her head proudly. "I'm going to New York myself soon . . . probably this winter. . . . I'm going to study music."

Mr. Murdock was very ready. "Well, we must meet again there. . . . It's a lonely place for a girl without family or friends."

"But I don't get homesick," said Ellen, with the sophisticated air of an experienced traveler. "I certainly wouldn't be homesick in New York."

From that moment Mr. Murdock began to regard her with a deeper interest. Perhaps he saw that by her side May had no points to be compared with Ellen's air of quiet assurance, her youthful dignity, her curiously apparent respect for herself as an individual. She sat in the plush rocker within the glow from the bronze lamp. At the moment she was not awkward at all; she was tall, graceful, dark, even a little imposing. The essence of

her individuality rose triumphant above the plush rocker, the engravings that hung against the elaborate wall paper, above even the cheap dress which concealed her young slenderness. She stirred the imagination. Certainly her face was interesting.

"I didn't know," began Mr. Murdock, "that you were a professional musician. . . . I don't suppose you like playing ragtime. . . . Maybe you'd play me something good . . . something classical, really good, I mean like Nevin or MacDowell."

And Mr. Murdock, growing communicative, went on to say that his sister played too. She lived in Ogdensburg, New York. He had come from Ogdensburg to make his fortune in the city. That was the reason, he said, that he understood how lonely a person could be.

"Of course, it's different now," he continued, "I have lots of friends. . . . Homer Bunce and Herbert Wyck. . . . But you'll meet them when you come to New York."

He was very pleasant, Mr. Murdock. And he was nice looking in a rather spiritless way. His eyes were kind and his hands nice. To Ellen hands were important features. Shrewd beyond her years, she saw people by their hands and their mouths. Mr. Murdock's mouth was a trifle small and compressed, but otherwise all right. He might be a prig, but underneath the priggishness there lay a character nice enough.

"And now won't you play for me?" he persisted, "something of Nevin or MacDowell?"

Ellen went to the piano and played a Venetian Sketch and To a Waterlily. She and Miss Ogilvie considered such music pap. From choice she would not have played it, but she understood at once that Mr. Murdock would like this music. Indeed he had asked for it. She knew he would like what the people in the Town liked. Mr. Murdock listened with his eyes closed and when she had finished he said, "My, that's fine. . . . I like soft, sweet music."

She was still playing when May and Herman returned bearing the hot chocolate and plates of cakes, followed closely by the simian Jimmy, his mouth stuffed to overflowing. Mr. Murdock still listened, lying back in his chair with closed eyes.

It was Mr. Murdock who outmaneuvered the *gauche* Herman Biggs and escorted her home. They talked stiffly, walking very close to each other through the pouring rain beneath the Tolliver family umbrella.

On the steps of the porch, Ellen bade him good-night.

"We must meet again before I go away."

"Certainly," said Ellen; but in her heart she had resolved against it, for she considered Mr. Murdock slightly boring. It was possible, she could see now, for people to live in a city and still never leave their home towns.

It was like Mr. Seton, thought Ellen. Every two years he went to Europe to visit the Junoform Reinforced Corset branch factory at St. Denis near Paris, but he really never left the Town at all. He carried it with him.

If only she could go to Paris. . . .

6

MR. MURDOCK stayed a week longer than he had planned, and before he left he managed to see Ellen not once, but many times. Always May was present, giggling and admiring, though toward the end, under the prodding of a shrewd mother who saw a concealed menace in the situation, she betrayed a slight and refreshing coldness toward her friend. Before he left, Ellen called him Mr. Murdock no longer, but Clarence.

In the weeks that followed she received from him two post cards, one a colored picture of lower New York photographed from Brooklyn Bridge against the sunset and the other a view of the Reservoir at Forty-Second street which, he wrote, had been demolished a little while before. On them he recalled her promise to let him know when she came to New York. May, however, received a dozen post cards and a half-dozen letters, so his correspondence with Ellen must have signified nothing at all. Certainly it did not excite her deeply.

"Clarence writes me," said May one day, "that you are going to New York. Why didn't you tell me? . . . I should think you'd tell your best friend a thing like that."

And Ellen slipped into a cloud of evasions. "I may have told him that," she replied airily. "I don't know how he could have found out. . . . It was a secret, I haven't mentioned it to anyone." And she made a number of vague excuses, which seemed neither logical nor founded upon fact. It was as if she considered May too stupid to understand such things or thought her too unimportant to consider at all.

"It's funny," said May, "that you'd tell such a thing to a stranger like Clarence. . . ." For a moment the suspicions planted in her complacent mind by an aspiring mother stirred with life and raised their heads. But she succumbed again quickly to the domination of her companion and thrust an arm about Ellen's waist.

"It's only because I'm interested," she said. "I know that you're going to be great and famous some day. . . . We're all going to be proud of you."

At which Ellen sniffed, not without an air of scorn, as if she cared not a fig whether the Town was proud of her or not.

At home, however, May received another warning from her mother. "Mr. Murdock," said the plump Mrs. Seaton, "is not a young man to be passed up lightly. . . . There aren't many like him. . . . He suits your father to a T, and he

would fit in fine at the factory. Your father needs some one like that to help him out, until Jimmy is big enough to take hold. . . . Don't trust Ellen too far. . . . She's too quiet to be trusted."

At which May only laughed. "Why, Ellen wouldn't think of marrying him," she said, "she won't marry anybody in this town. . . . It isn't likely she'll ever marry . . . at least for a long time. Besides, she doesn't think he's good enough."

Mrs. Seton snorted angrily and put down the Ladies' Home Journal. "Good enough for her. . . ! Who is she to be so choosy? . . . Why, the Tollivers can't pay their bills. . . . They're just out of bankruptcy. . . . Good enough for her. . . ! If she ever gets as fine and upstanding a young man as Mr. Murdock . . . a man so industrious and hardworking and well-behaved, she can thank her stars. . . ." For a moment Mrs. Seton paused to recover her breath, greatly dissipated by this indignant outburst. That Ellen should scorn Mr. Clarence Murdock was not a thing to be borne lightly. Then she continued, "And this talk about going to New York. . . . How's she going to get to New York? Who's to put up the money, I'd like to know? Old Julia Shane, I suppose. . . . It's not likely the old woman would part with a cent even if she could."

It was, in the Seton family, a cherished fiction that Julia Shane was stricken by an overwhelming poverty: it was a fiction that increased the confidence of a fortune founded upon reinforced corsets.

"Julia Shane!" continued the ambitious mother, "Julia Shane! What's she got to be proud about? . . . With a daughter as fast and loose as Lily? . . . I suppose she's proud of living in that filthy old house in the midst of the Flats."

And so the ashes of the feud between the Setons and the Barr-Shane-Tolliver clan, lighted accidentally by the chance appearance of the guiltless and model Mr. Murdock, showed signs of flaming up again after a peace of twenty years.

THE Christmas holidays arrived; the Tollivers sold the last of their horses, and went on showing brave and indifferent faces to the world. Ellen, going her secret way, awaited the arrival of her cousin Lily, still certain that Lily would have a solution. She no longer argued with her mother. Instead she took refuge in silence and if she spoke at all it was in a docile and pleasant fashion. She permitted herself to be petted and admired, so that Mrs. Tolliver in the eternal optimism of her nature believed that Ellen had forgotten or outgrown her restlessness, and was content.

But the girl spent hours at her piano, playing wildly, as if the sound of her music in some way eased the fierce restlessness of her spirit. At times she attacked a polonaise with such violence and fire that the spangled notes soared through the air and penetrated even the stillness of Gramp Tolliver's solitary chamber. At such moments the old man paused in his reading, permitted his book to slip to the floor and sat in his rocking chair motionless, listening with his lean old head cocked a little on one side, a wild and dancing light in his eye. For hours at a time he listened thus, muttering occasionally to himself.

(That granddaughter of his had something which none of them suspected, something that was rare and precious in this world.) When the music at last died away, losing itself in the maze of walls which shut him into exile, it was his habit to sink back with a clucking sound and begin to rock, gently at first and then more and more savagely, until at last he became submerged by the stream of shrewd, malicious thoughts which swept through his old brain.

"She's got something none of them understand. . . . And I'm the only one who knows it. But they'll kill it in her. They'll pull her down until she's on the level with the rest of them. I know. . . . I know. . . . Haven't I heard Liszt himself, in Paris

in the heyday of his fame? And Rubinstein? They'll destroy her if they can with all their little tricks and deceits. . . . Mean they are, meaner than dirt, trying to drag her down to the rest of them. . . . The girl doesn't know it herself. . . . How good she is no one has ever told her. . . . She doesn't know the power that's in her. They'll never let her free. They'll clip her wings. They've clipped the wings of greater ones. . . ."

And then with a cascade of wicked chuckles the old man settled back to his reading. "They've never clipped my wings. They can't because I don't live in their world. They can't come close enough to catch me. They can't fly high enough. . . ."

And slowly the rocking decreased in violence until at last the chair became quite still and the skinny arm reached down to recover the heavy book. Belowstairs the last echoes of the turbulent music died away until the silence was broken only by the distant cries of children playing in the streets and the faint muttering of the old man. . . .

"It's best that she doesn't know. . . . It wouldn't help her . . . only make her miserable . . . only give them a chance to tear her to pieces, nerve by nerve. . . ."

Again the persistent rocking until at last the room grew dark, and the old man rose in response to a loud knock on the door of the stairs, stirred himself and lighted an oil lamp so that he might find his way to the tray of food that Mrs. Tolliver thrust in at the door of his cell. There was no gas in this room beneath the roof; Gramp Tolliver had been an expense for too many years. It would have cost twenty dollars to fit his room with gas lights. And in ten years he had produced nothing save the scraps of paper covered with bird track handwriting that were stowed away in the pigeonholes of the desk.

In those days there came to Grandpa Tolliver, more by some obscure instinct than by any communication with those outside

his cell, the certainty that his granddaughter's behavior was a source of irritation to the people of the Town. True, he occasionally overheard from the kitchen below snatches of reproachful conversation which drifted upward by way of the ventilator . . . strange remarks which appeared to come out of the blue, yet when pieced together they provided a coherent story. Reproaches of sulkiness, of silence, of secrecy, cast by a mother, who desired nothing so much as confidences, against a daughter who was incapable of anything but secrecy. They were an ill-matched pair. This the old man understood, with a sort of wicked satisfaction, because the things which in Ellen were incomprehensible to her mother were the things which had come down to the girl from himself. It was another mark in the long score between Grandpa Tolliver and his daughter-in-law; another, in which nature herself took a hand, in the long battle between two fiercely antagonistic temperaments.

He could not have known that the people in the Town likewise had reproaches for Ellen. He could not have known that they said it was her duty to begin giving music lessons in order to prop up the fortunes of a proud and bankrupt family. Yet in his unearthly way, he did know; and in some vague way he was pleased. Even in his isolation so impregnable, so defiant, his heart was warmed by the thought of an ally. The enemy was driving Ellen, a neutral, into his camp; and into his icy heart there came drop by drop a warm trickle of unaccustomed sympathy. Not that Gramp Tolliver planned active aid; that would have been too much to expect, for Gramp Tolliver had discovered half a century earlier the idiocy of mixing in the affairs of other people.

Instead he chuckled and read in triumph and vindication *The Decline and Fall*.

ON the morning of the third day before Christmas, Clarence Murdock, bearing a neat handbag packed with those things which he would need during a journey of three weeks through the middle-western country, turned his back on the Babylon Arms and made his way toward the railway station and the transcontinental express. Behind him he left the two young men whom, in the fashion of bachelors who have migrated without root or connection from the provinces into a great city, he had picked up as companions somewhere amid the flotsam and jetsam of Manhattan life. They had come to him separately, each drawn perhaps in his own way by the smug neatness which marked the life and character of Clarence. Yet the two men were in no way alike. Their difference was manifested in the very reasons for their attachment to Clarence. The one, an adventurous boisterous soul, had fastened upon Clarence because Clarence had a talent for keeping things in order, a perfect genius indeed for pigeonholing the very emotions of his own life. Out of the mighty chaos which was the essence of the wholehearted Homer Bunce, there emerged a pathetic need for order and comfort; and this Clarence supplied to superb satisfaction. Even the books and pillows of their tiny apartment were kept in scrupulous order. Disorder made Clarence nervous.

Mr. Wyck, on the other hand, had found strength in Clarence, a thing which Bunce himself never even thought of finding in the orderly depths of Clarence's soul. For Mr. Wyck's family was old and Mr. Wyck himself lacked vitality. There was in the lower Manhattan in those days a street named for the Wycks, a street renamed long since, in the hasty fashion of a great city, for a Tammany politician. His family was so old (as age went in New York) that there remained only himself and two spinster aunts who lived at Yonkers. It was this antiquity of blood which the pale Mr. Wyck counted upon as the very rod and staff of

his existence. At his first meeting with Clarence, at an annual outing on Staten Island of the employees of the Superba Electrical Company, Inc., Mr. Wyck had sensed in Clarence a certain un-American and shameful respect for an old family name, the strange yearning in a man with no tradition for a name which carried with it memories, even though they were very distant and virtually obsolete, of coaches and country estates. They *were* distant, for seventy years had gone the way of eternity since there had been money in the Wyck family, and the descendant of the patroons, the last of the Wycks, now followed his fortune as a clerk in the accounting department of the Superba Electrical Company, Inc.

On the rock of this respect for tradition, Wyck had fastened his hope. At length, he discovered in Clarence a man who was impressed; and the self-respect of Mr. Wyck, for all the insignificance of his world, increased in direct proportion with the awe produced in Clarence Murdock by the awful sound of the name Wyck.

Thus the three had come together, living in a fashion contented enough, in a tiny apartment filled with beaded portières bought at a Seventh Avenue emporium and leather cushions decorated with pyrographic Indian heads by loving sisters and aunts. Yet a spirit of unrest hovered over the place, an uneasiness which none save Mr. Wyck discerned with any degree of clarity. He alone knew that the day would come when, one after the other with fatal precision, his two companions would find their present mode of life unendurable. In turn each was certain to choose, from among the hordes of girls that swarmed the streets of New York, a mate. Only the gods knew who these two women might be or where they were at that moment. There was only one certainty, and that Mr. Wyck, with the sensitiveness of an effeminate man of low vitality, admitted to himself. Clarence and Bunce would marry, Bunce no doubt for love because his animal

spirits were high, Clarence perhaps because he would be trapped by the glamour of a tradition.

Oh, Mr. Wyck understood this. It troubled him in the moments when he was left in solitude. It disturbed his digestion of the greasy meals which he ate alone each day in some hole-in-the-wall restaurant far downtown near the offices of the Superba Electrical Company, Inc. It was impossible that he should ever marry. Women had never interested him; the very idea filled him with a faint disgust. He would not only be left alone in the world; he would no longer possess even Clarence who respected his name. He knew that any woman was stronger than himself.

'The Babylon Arms raised its twelve stories in one of the Eighties just east of Riverside Drive. Among the brownstone fronts of the early part of this century its gaunt sides gave it an overpowering appearance of height, loneliness, even grandeur. In those days great apartments were rare in that part of New York, and the Babylon Arms stood as a solitary outpost of the army of apartment houses which since have ranged their extravagant bulks in a solid face along the North River and eastward to the Park. The Babylon Arms is still there, rather shabby and *démodé*, a belle of the early nineteen hundreds, out of fashion, overpainted, with electric bulbs fitted into gas brackets and the once somber red walls of its hallways painted over in grotesque imitation of the more ostentatious marble of its newer sisters. But its pride is gone. It stands jostled now and a little battered, like the bedizened women who came in from the streets to flit through its gloomy corridors. It is shabby genteel, like the two old ladies who live in the parlor bed-room of the first floor. It is jolly and good-natured, like the clerk and his family who climb the two flights of worn stairs above the point where the antiquated elevator rocks uncertainly to its final stop. It is comic, respectable, quaint, vulgar, tragic, common and happy . . . all these things;

and so after a fashion, in the way of old houses, it is like life itself.

But it was new and elegant in the early nineteen hundreds. The Babylon Arms! It was a name known throughout the growing Upper West Side! It was the first of the skyscraping apartment houses. And among the pioneer cliff dwellers were Clarence Murdock and two companions who shared among them the expenses of the apartment two floors above where the elevator jolted uncertainly to a final stop. It was not so expensive—living two floors above the elevator; and the name "Babylon Arms" looked impressive, even a little flamboyant, on one's card. To Bunce the name signified opulence, a certain grandiose triumph of success; to Clarence it meant that people would say, "Ah, the Babylon Arms! He must have a good background to live there!" To Mr. Wyck, it meant simply that he was keeping up one of the traditions of his name; yet there were times too when he was a little ashamed of the Babylon Arms as an institution touched by vulgarity.

As Clarence on the third day before Christmas closed the door behind him on the bead portières and burnt leather cushions, he left Bunce singing lustily as he rubbed his great healthy body in the chilly air of the bathroom, and Mr. Wyck, still lying in bed, his thin, slightly yellow nose peeping above the blankets against the hour when it would be painfully necessary for him to rise. As the door closed, Bunce's rendition of "I'm afraid to go home in the dark" was interrupted for an instant while he shouted after Clarence, "Look out now and don't come home married to that fat, pretty Seton girl!"

At the shout Clarence hastened away, shocked a little by the vulgarity of Bunce. As for Mr. Wyck the words struck terror into his heart. He saw the breaking up of his home. He saw himself, a timid, frightened little man, lost once more among the obscenities of a cheap boarding house.

A NUMBER of things made necessary this trip of Clarence; there were the usual customers to be visited; the new equipment of the Junoform Corset Factory was in need of inspection, and finally there was an engagement to spend Christmas and several days of the holiday season as the guest of the Seton family; and this he looked upon with relief because life in hotels had come to weary him inexpressibly. He longed for a home, with a wife who would put by his slippers for him and sit by his fireside. The prospect of one dreary hotel after another burdened his soul; so the acceptance of Mr. Seton's invitation had been even colored by a subdued enthusiasm.

It was, after all, ambition which had betrayed him into city life and the wretched, fly-by-night existence of a drummer. He was ambitious to be wealthy, to be admired, to be honored in a community.

There were times, but these were rare and isolated moments, when his ambitions rose for an instant beyond even these things, times when, in an ecstasy of intoxication, they soared dizzily among the pinnacles of hope far beyond the reach of one whose place in the structure of life was clearly somewhere in the foundations. It was then that he caught for an instant glimpses of a life in which he saw himself not only wealthy and respectable but distinguished and glamorous, one whose character captured the imagination, who gave himself and his life to the great world.

All this was perhaps not clearly thought out in his mind; yet he sensed its presence a little way beyond his reach as a small boy searches in the darkness of a jam closet for something which he knows is there but cannot see.

In these lurid, almost ecstatic moments, he saw his future wife not so much in the rôle of a domestic paragon, as a brilliant and beautiful creature, fit to walk through the avenues of the

great world by the side of a clever and worldly man. To be sure, such things were never mentioned to fellow-drummers, yet they were there, shut up in his heart, quiet save for rare moments. His companions in the smoking car may have had their secrets too. It is impossible to say. If such secrets existed, they were too well hidden beneath their suspicions of each other.

It was in one of his placid, normal moods that he boarded the train for the west. He took off his brown overcoat with the half-belt at the back, his brown fedora hat, adjusted his eyeglasses, and settled himself in his chair. At the moment he permitted his thoughts to hover about the picture of May Seton, pale, blonde, good-natured and pretty in her plump way. There was nothing in the least carnal in these thoughts, for he was a young man who might have served as a model for those institutions which concern themselves with the morals of young men and preach the doctrine that complete purity of mind is possible by sheer perseverance alone. He was innocent of women. He had worked hard and had no time for them. Indeed the very thought of them in that way gave him a faintly squeamish feeling. He was one of those in whom desire follows in the wake of timid experience, who cannot in the beginning conceive passion otherwise than abstractly. So now he conceived May Seton more as an idea, a sort of stepping stone to comfort and warmth, than as a woman to be desired. That he might be a sensual man had never occurred to him.

As the train moved across the Jersey Flats he fell to considering his prospects as a son-in-law of Harvey Seton and the certainty of an interest in the Junoform Reinforced Corset Company, a thing already hinted at by his suppositious mother-in-law. He thought of the Town. He pictured, quite clearly and placidly, a small and pleasant house surrounded by shrubs and trees, a comfortable front porch. He even pictured Mrs. May Seton Murdock in a rocking chair, far more attractive than she was

in the flesh, darning his socks. In fact, he saw his future bounded on four sides by Junoform Reinforced Corsets, by May Seton, by the Town and by hard work. It was this placid and uneventful path that his feet were to follow.

The car in which Clarence sat, like all cars bound from the East across the mountains into the fertile and prosperous Midlands, was crowded. He was not a man gifted with great curiosity and rarely indulged himself in speculation concerning his fellow travelers. Indeed, from his manner one soon understood that he observed very little about him. And now as the wheels clicked along the smooth track he settled himself to reading. He had brought with him against the monotonous agony of the trip a book by Richard Harding Davis and a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and these absorbed his attention until the train had passed Philadelphia and turned northward a bit in the direction of Altoona. Presently his interest flagged and he fell to watching the scenery; but before long this too wearied him and he fell asleep. Slumber was a state which he welcomed, for there were long periods when his mind grew exhausted with turning over the same frayed thoughts. There were times when it might have been said that he existed in a state of suspended animation.

So between slumber and a bored wakefulness, the hours passed in a succession of dreary towns and monotonous winter-dead farms, punctuated by signs advertising patent medicines and cheap hotels. As the train swept through Johnstown, he was for a moment diverted by the sight of so much smoke and desolation, by the gigantic slag heaps and the flaming furnaces. The spectacle was not a new one. He must have seen it twenty times, by day when it was sordid, and by night when it became wild and fantastically magnificent. Yet it interested him as it always interested him, tugging at some part of his soul which failed to fit the neat pattern of his universal conformity.

"What a great country!" he reflected. "By George! It's a

privilege to be a citizen of a country so energetic and prosperous!"

A curious light came suddenly into his nice brown eyes, and for a time the corset factory and May Seton were forgotten in the face of a new emotion, so much more profound and stirring. Even the rawness, the barren crudity of the picture exalted him. For a moment his ambitions threatened to gain the upper hand—those wild unruly ambitions which sometimes bore him beyond the round of thoughts which wearied him.

"To own mills like these!" he thought. "To be a power in industry. To go to Europe every year. To have a great house and one of these new automobiles."

And Johnstown disappeared behind the train, lost in a gigantic and all-enveloping cloud of smoke and soot through which the flames of the furnaces flashed dimly.

The monotonous mountains, seamed with black rivers flowing between crags of blue ice, succeeded the smutty town, and Clarence settled back in his chair. But he did not read. He sat staring out of the window, thinking, thinking, thinking. Perhaps he tried to nurse his sense of importance, to persuade himself that he possessed the stuff which went into the accomplishments of great ambitions.

The roaring train sped on and on, and presently he went into the smoking compartment where he fell into conversation with other traveling salesmen. They exchanged stories of a broad nature, until Clarence, by nature a nice young man, found the flavor growing too strong and returned to his seat.

Then it was for the first time that he noticed his fellow passengers. He did not notice all of them, or even two or three. He noticed only one, a woman who sat in the chair beside him reading a novel with a yellow paper back called "*Chère*" by a person with the queer name of Colette.

He sat down and tried to read but, for some obscure reason, the figure of the woman kept getting between him and the story of the great open spaces. He found himself reading paragraphs which meant nothing to him. He read an entire page without

knowing what had happened in the tale. Such a thing had never happened to him before.

The woman who kept thrusting herself between him and the story was dressed all in black, though she did not appear to be in mourning. Rather it seemed that she wore black because it became her. Across one shoulder was thrown a stole of black fox and from the brim of her small hat hung a froth of black lace which obscured her dark eyes and permitted her to regard her companions without receiving in return the force of their stares. From beneath the hat there escaped a bit of tawny hair, so dark that in some lights it appeared almost red. She appeared to take full advantage of the shield made by the lace, for from time to time she put down her yellow-backed novel and fell to observing the people about her . . . a middle-aged woman with a little boy in a sailor suit, a fat man who lay back in his seat and snored quietly, a pair of college girls, one reading ponderously the essays of Emerson and the other absorbed (self-consciously) in the pages of Boccaccio; another traveling salesman and a pair of old women returning from a funeral who vied with each other in a talking race.

"And then I said to her . . ." "She said, 'Mabel, he'll never be well again . . . even if he didn't die, he'll never be well again'" . . . and "What do you think of such behavior? . . . Unpardonable, I thought. . . ." "I quite agree with you, unpardonable. . . ." "Well, that's what I told Mabel."

Snatches of the old women's talk, projected in voices pitched high enough to override the clamor of the train, were tossed about them like jagged fragments of glass.

The woman with the veil put down her book and, smiling quietly, listened to them. She turned away from Clarence a little so that he was able to shift his position and thus obtain a clearer view of her.

She was beautiful, and even to Clarence, unskilled in such fine distinctions, it was clear that she was a lady. This fact was conveyed beyond all doubt by the way she sat, poised with

a neat and easy grace, in the way her slender hands clasping her book lay against the black of her dress, the way she carried her head and wore her fine clothes, even by the veil which somehow stood as a symbol of all that was gently bred in her character. There seemed between her and the others in the car an invisible veil which shielded her while she looked out upon them from a different world.

At her feet stood a smart black handbag, covered with bright labels. Clarence read them one after another in a kind of intoxication—Sorrento, Cannes, Dieppe, Hotel Ruhl, Hotel Royal Splendide, Hotel Ritz-Carlton. And, surely yet imperceptibly, just as an hour or two earlier the sight of the Johnstown furnaces had captivated his moderate imagination, the woman began to take possession of him. Somehow these two impressions became blended, and out of them there came to Clarence glimpses of a brilliant world which he never before penetrated, even in the wildest flights of ambition.

Presently the stranger, wearied of listening to her companions, resumed her reading and Clarence, still fascinated, continued to watch her until, becoming conscious of his gaze, she turned suddenly and dismissed him by the faintest movement of her shoulder. At the gesture, which from her seemed a command, he turned quickly away and blushed as if she had spoken to him in rebuke. Yet it seemed to him that as she glanced in his direction, her lovely mouth was arched for an instant by the faintest of smiles—a smile which said: "Staring does not disturb me. It is nothing new to me." It may even have been that she mocked him. It was impossible to say. Only one thing remained certain; Clarence had been disturbed by something entirely new in his experience.

In his own way he tried to discover what it was that suddenly shattered all his peace. The woman was beautiful, yet he in no sense desired her. Indeed, in the dull purity of his mind, it is probable that no such unclean thought even occurred to him.

Beyond all doubt she fascinated him, yet it was not this which destroyed his ease. Rather it was something in her manner, something in her very bearing and personality which overwhelmed him . . . that sudden glimpse of another world, in which people lived lives as different from his as day is different from night, a sudden terror at her self-possession, at the unseen, impregnable barrier by which she protected herself from those others in the car. There was in her manner too a certain veiled but terrifying recklessness.

With an air of infinite absorption, she continued to read the yellow-backed novel, as if she had forgotten that the man in the seat beside her existed. Beyond her, the two old women continued, "And I said to her when she rang me up the next morning . . ." "It's shameful what some women will do!" . . . "Since that day he's been an invalid, unable to stir!" And they clucked and wagged their crêpe-clad heads like a pair of crows on a fence.

The train roared on through the blue-white mountains, into the west toward Pittsburgh. Upon the hills the early winter darkness had already begun to descend.

Still Clarence did not read. The novel and the *Saturday Evening Post* slipped to the floor and lay there unnoticed. The characters in his book failed to hold their own against the woman in the adjoining seat. He even had a faint sense of being on the edge of the romantic and exciting.

And at the same moment, the thoughts of May Seton and a comfortable house in the Town were swept away like so much rubbish into oblivion, carrying with them the sense of peace and certainty which a little time before made the future so pleasant and comfortable.

Presently he rose and went into the smoking compartment where he remained for a time. When he emerged, it was quite dark, and high up on the barren mountains an occasional warm yellow light indicated the existence of a lonely house. Return-

ing to his chair he found the mysterious woman had vanished. Only the somber handbag covered with bright labels remained. The names glittered . . . Sorrento, Cannes, Firenze, Beau Rivage, Royal Splendide, Claridge's, Berkeley. . . .

He glanced at his gold watch (the gift of Uncle Henry) and decided to dine. Making his way toward the dining car, he found the passageway blocked by other passengers, college girls and boys, drummers like himself, old women, children, all swaying with the motion of the speeding train. It was a bad time to travel, on the eve of a holiday; yet the crowd was pleasant enough, good-natured, laughing, on the whole gay with the holiday spirit.

Slowly the door of the dining car devoured the thin line, casting out others who fought their way back in an opposing column, until at last Clarence stood at the entrance of the bright car, surveying the groups of heads bent over swaying soup and underdone chops.

Still harassed and unaccountably miserable, he stood first on one foot and then the other, surveying the crowd until at length he discovered far down the aisle his friend of the paper-backed novel. She sat at a table for two opposite an elderly man in a black frock coat who, quite properly, did not address her although he seemed not unconscious of her presence, for he stole from time to time glances at her tawny hair and fine throat until she dismissed him suddenly with a frank stare in which there was a great deal more than a hint of amusement. After that a wall, invisible as it was impenetrable, separated them, as was proper between two victims of a system which threw harassed travelers arbitrarily into each other's company. As she ate the woman continued to look about her as if she were profoundly amused by the friendly spectacle of the rocking car. Still she appeared to use the film of lace as a perpetual shield.

He had been watching her thus for a long time when, to his

sudden horror, he saw the elderly man wipe his thin mouth with his napkin, pay his check and, followed by the steward, move fatally toward the end of the car. At the sight Clarence was tempted suddenly to run. Yet it was impossible to run. The best one could do was to turn back and squeeze slowly and painfully past the fat encumbrances of the corridor. Besides, how could one make a spectacle of one's self? What would people think? He stood frozen with horror, filled with the sensations of one about to be dragged forward to torture. As in a nightmare he felt himself borne forward by a steward who grinned maliciously and said, "Place for one? Certainly! Right this way."

Without effort he floated through space until suddenly, with a tormented and unuttered groan, he sank into the seat opposite the woman with the delicate black veil.

He felt the pulses beating in his throat. He bent over the menu card, but even this did not protect him. Again the unreality of a nightmare smote him. This time he was naked and horribly embarrassed at his improper predicament. He sensed the woman examining him as she examined the others, with a detached and curious smile of appraisal.

These were his sensations, various, confused, terrifying. As though there were eyes in the top of his neatly brushed head, he saw all this happening. What he did not see, what he could not have known were the thoughts of the woman—that she watched him, that she saw the throbbing vein in his throat stand out suddenly and knew well enough its meaning. By the aid of that agitated vein she saw, with a sophistication beyond his wildest imaginings, in this mild little drummer a man of a sensual, passionate nature. The thing which amused her was a speculation, absurd to be sure, but none the less clear. She wondered whether this little man knew himself, whether he had ever been aroused.

"Chops," Clarence found himself writing on the check. "Chops. Mashed potatoes. Lima beans. Coffee."

Then the sound of a voice reached him, warm, low, insinuating. "I advise you against the chops. They are atrocious. I was forced to send them back and order something else."

The woman had spoken to him of her own accord and his suspicions arose in sudden array, bristling and fully armed. Yet he knew that he must answer. Heroically he looked up and asked, "What do you advise?"

"The roast beef is very good. . . ."

Though he detested it, he wrote down roast beef and then straightened in his chair, pulling at his collar and cravat. For the life of him, he could find nothing to say. It was impossible to overcome that fragile, invisible barrier.

"Don't think me impertinent," she said, "for speaking . . . but I'm almost bored to death. . . . I hate traveling. . . . I'd like always to stay in one spot."

For an instant he suspected the faintest trace of a foreign accent in her voice, though he could not be certain.

"I know," he said politely, "I hate it too. . . ."

She laughed softly.

"It's the first time I've traveled any distance in years. . . . I couldn't talk to the old crow who sat there before you. . . . It would have frightened him to death."

It was impossible for Clarence to say that it also frightened him to death, so he coughed and buttered a bit of roll.

"You don't mind my speaking, do you?" she pursued.

For a moment Clarence fancied he had lost his mind. It was queer enough that a strange woman should speak to him, but even queerer that she should sweep past all the procedure of good manners and ask him directly whether he minded it. And she was neither brazen nor embarrassed.

"No, of course not," he managed to say, "I mean I'm awfully glad. I hate traveling alone."

Then it occurred to him that he had made an indelicate, perhaps a suggestive remark, and the blushes once more swept his face.

After hours the waiter arrived with the roast beef and lima beans.

"I haven't much farther to go," continued the woman. "Thank God, I'm not bound for Chicago."

Clarence found it impossible to eat beneath her gaze.

"I get off at eleven something . . ." he said, "I've forgotten exactly. . . ."

The woman laughed. "Why, so do I! We must be bound for the same place."

For an instant he succumbed to a terrifying suspicion that, in truth, she had marked him for her own. But this idea he dismissed quickly, as utterly improbable. The woman was clearly a lady. She was terribly sure of herself, of keeping things just where she wanted them. She might be a spy, an adventuress. (Ghosts of a thousand cheap magazine stories danced through his brain.) Yet a woman like that, if she were bad, wouldn't be bothering herself with insignificant game like himself. He began to believe that she had been speaking the truth, that she had been driven to address him only out of a vast boredom.

"Perhaps we are," he said, and told her that he was bound for the Town.

"So am I," she replied. "It's the first time I've been back there in years. . . . Maybe you come from the Town?" she continued.

The discovery of this bond helped matters a little. It furnished at least some ground for the stumbling feet of Clarence.

"No, I'm going on business. . . . I've been there before. . . . It's a nice progressive Town, full of booming factories . . . a place to be proud of."

But he found abruptly that he had taken the wrong turning. The stranger was not proud of the Town. "I suppose you might be proud of it, if you like that sort of thing. . . . I find it abominable." For a moment, the bantering, charming, humorous look went out of the eyes behind the veil, supplanted by a sudden sadness. "No," she continued, "I don't like it, though I've no doubt it's very prosperous."

For a moment Clarence was baffled. He understood suddenly that this new strange world was more remote, more unfamiliar than he had imagined. It was not perhaps made out of factories and roaring furnaces. The discovery increased his awkwardness and in some strange way distended the glamour with which he surrounded her. He struggled for words.

"I'm going to spend Christmas with the Setons," he said. "Probably you know them. They've always lived in the Town."

The woman frowned slightly. "Seton?" she repeated, "Seton?" Then it appeared that the light dawned upon her. "To be sure. . . . I know. . . . They own a corset factory. . . . But they're new people. Yes, I know who they are although I don't know them."

She made the statement simply and without a trace of condescension. She made it as a simple observation. If she had said, "I know who the King of England is . . . but I don't know him," the intonation, the inflection would have been identical. She had answered his question, but she had answered it more profoundly than she knew, more profoundly, more tragically than even Clarence knew until years afterward. "*I know who they are although I don't know them.*"

Before the eyes of Clarence there rose suddenly the image of May Seton, good-natured, trivial, blonde, commonplace. It was almost as if she had entered the train by some obscure miracle and stood there beside the mysterious stranger, awkward, silly, ungainly.

The woman was rising now. "I must go back to my seat," she said. "It isn't fair to keep the others waiting." She pulled the stole of black fox about her handsome shoulders and lowered the veil. "Thank you," she said, "for saving a poor helpless traveler from boredom."

And with that she closed the adventure.

When he returned to his seat, he found her sitting absorbed in

her yellow-backed novel. Greeting him with a faint smile, she returned to her reading. After an hour she rested her head against the back of the chair and appeared to fall asleep. It was not until the train roared into the Town that she again addressed him.

Snow filled the air as they got down from the train at midnight. The big flakes, tormented by a rising wind, fell heavily, obscuring the yellow lights of the dirty brick station. They were the only passengers to descend and Clarence offered to take charge of her luggage. There were two large trunks and another handbag. The trunks she left at the station. She would send for them. The two handbags she would take with her.

The great train, spouting steam, got under way with a vast uproar. The brightly lighted cars moved away into the snowstorm and the pair of them were left alone beneath the yellow glare of the station lamps. A little way off two horse drawn cabs stood by the curb, the heads of the beasts hanging, their backs bent against the storm. From the warm station emerged a pair of drivers, muffled to the ears. To one of them, the lady called out.

"Oh, Jerry," she said, "I'm glad you're here. . . . There's no one to meet me. . . . I didn't send word ahead."

The plumper of the two old men took off his hat and peered at her for a moment while the snow fell on his bald head. Slowly recognition came to him. "Sure, Miss Lily. . . . It's a pleasure. . . . Back again, after so many years . . . and not a day older, if you'll let me say so."

At this the stranger laughed softly. The cabby took the bags from Clarence, who had bestirred himself briskly to do the proper thing.

"It's late," he said. "Perhaps I'd better go with you to see that nothing happens."

"Thank you," replied his companion, "but I'll be safe. . . . I haven't far to go . . . and I've known Jerry all my life. . . .

He has driven me ever since I was a little girl. . . . You see I only live a little way off." She laughed again, "Right in the midst of the Mills." She made a little gesture with her big muff to indicate the direction of the Mills. There, above the encircling flames of the furnaces, rose dimly the silhouette of a great house crowning the top of a low hill. But for the flames of the furnaces it would have remained invisible. Now it stood out against the red, snow-dimmed glare, black, mysterious.

The woman stepped into the swaying, moth-eaten cab and the driver climbed to the seat. Suddenly she leaned out of the window and addressed Clarence. "Before we part," she said, "I suppose we ought to know each other's names, *pour sauver les convenances*. I'm Miss Shane," she added, "Miss Lily Shane."

Clarence took off his hat and bowed. "I'm Mr. Murdock. . . . Mr. Clarence Murdock."

"And you won't think me wicked, I know," she added, "for speaking to a strange man. . . . I'm careful who I speak to. . . . I knew I would be safe with you."

And the cab drove off through the snowstorm in the direction of Shane's Castle, leaving Clarence on the platform mumbling a polite answer, his face scarlet, his pulses beating faster than they had ever beaten before.

After a moment he climbed into the other cab and bade the driver take him to the residence of Mr. Harvey Seton. The contentment, the holiday spirit had oozed out of him. He was no longer glad to be spending Christmas with the Setons. Reflecting upon his recent encounter, it occurred to him suddenly what it was that was familiar about the woman. Lily Shane! To be sure, she was the cousin of Ellen Tolliver! The rich cousin . . . ! There was something about her that reminded him of Ellen as she sat talking to him in the Setons' parlor, something withdrawn and contained, rather distinguished and proud. In one of those moments of insight, so rare to him, he saw all at once that there was

in the girl and her cousin something which set them aside from the others.

This thought he turned over and over in his mind as the musty cab, smelling faintly of ammonia, bore him through the blowing storm further and further into the smug future that lay spread out before him in a suburban panorama of little white houses with "artistic" piazzas and shutters ornamented by cut-out hearts and diamonds; and after a time he became once more almost content. The wild disturbance caused by the sudden encounter with the stranger appeared to have quieted, when another thought, entering suddenly his tired brain, made him miserable once more. He fell to considering the final speech of Miss Lily Shane. . . . *"I'm careful who I speak to. I knew I should be safe with you."* . . .

He could not make out whether or not the speech was meant as a tribute to him. Something in the memory of the stranger's manner implied that he was a poor thing.

And then it occurred to him that at this very moment he must be passing the Tollivers' house, and poking his head out of the cab window, he saw that there was still a light in the windows. For an instant he fancied that the wind bore toward him the strains of wild music, surging and passionate; but of this he could not be certain, for the wind howled wildly and snow fell in a thick blanket. It may have been, after all, only his imagination; it had been playing him queer tricks since the very moment he raised his eyes and saw Miss Lily Shane sitting there beside him.

IO

THE same evening was for Mrs. Tolliver one of rare peace and happiness—an evening when, warmed by the glow from the open fire, she sat surrounded by her family while the blizzard howled and tore at the eaves, setting the limbs of the gnarled old apple tree to scratch against the frozen panes.

At such times there was in her appearance something grand and majestic; she sat in her ample chair like a triumphant Niobe, a sort of enthroned maternity the borders of whose narrow kingdom ended with the walls of the Tolliver living room.

It was a large square room, infinitely clean, although shabby and worn, for the dominant rules of the Tolliver household were cleanliness and comfort. It was this room which was the core of the Tolliver existence, the shrine of the sacred Lares and Penates, such a room as has existed rarely in each generation of the world since the beginning of time. With her family assembled about her, the cares and worries of the day slipped from her shoulders softly, beautifully into oblivion. She rested herself by darning the family stockings.

Near her Ellen sat at the piano playing, playing endlessly, in the wild and passionate fashion which sometimes overwhelmed them all, causing the mother to cease her darning for an instant, young Fergus to look up from his book, and even Charles Tolliver to stir himself sleepily and forget in the surge of her music the cares which he sought to drown each evening in sleep. The great shabby sofa was his. There it was that he lay for hours every night, until at length and after much effort, he was shepherded off to bed by his energetic wife. Perhaps he slept because in sleep he found a solace for the complacent failure of his life.

Robert, the younger brother, lay on his stomach beside the fire, his short nose wrinkled in an effort to decipher the mysteries of a picture puzzle. He had a passion for problems, and a persistence which had come to him from his mother.

Ah! They were a family in which to take pride! What was money compared to such a good husband and such fine children? So ran the thoughts of Mrs. Tolliver; and presently her face became wreathed in smiles, but she did not know she was smiling. If she had looked at that moment into a mirror, she would have been astounded. Her happiness at such moments ceased to be a conscious emotion.

Outside the windows the wind howled and the snow, falling

in the first real blizzard of the winter, whished against the rattling panes.

The fire crackled and presently beneath the great blanket her husband stirred slowly and murmured, "Ellen, play the one I like so much. . . . I don't know the name but you know what I mean."

And slowly Ellen turned into the melodies of one of *Liebesträume*—the one which is written about the lovers lost on a lake during a black storm.

In her strange way the girl loved her father best, perhaps because in his gentle impersonal way he made upon her none of those savage demands which her mother, in all the ferocity of her affection, constantly exacted. With Mrs. Tolliver love implied endearments, constant manifestations of affection. To her love between people separated by hundreds of miles was inconceivable. It was a thing to be touched, to be fondled and treasured. Those whom she loved must always be at hand, under her eye, full of protesting affection. Perhaps in this she was right; she was, after all, a primitive woman who trusted her instincts. There was no reason in her. Perhaps love *is* only fanned into life by close and breathless contacts.

Mr. Tolliver was so different. There was in him something of his father, a touch of the terrible philosophic aloofness of the gaunt old man who lived above the kitchen in another part of the house. But he lacked Gramp Tolliver's strength, as well as that implacable resistance of the old man to all the assaults of emotion. Where the old man was aloof, powerful, and independent through the very quality of his indifference, the son had failed by some weakness of character. There was in him too much of humanity. People liked him. Farmers in their fields stopped their horses and abandoned their plows to talk with Charlie Tolliver. At the elections they had supported him to a man; but there were not enough of them. The Town was too powerful.

In the world Charles Tolliver failed because of his very gentleness. He had a way of regarding life with a fine sense of pro-

portion, of seeing things in their proper relation. It was as if he stood already at the end of his own existence and looked back through it as through a long tunnel, seeing that those things which others labeled as mountains were after all but mole-hills, and those things which others would have called trivial possessed the most uncanny importance. And this was a weakness, for it led one into the paths of philosophic acceptance; and it was a weakness which none recognized more shrewdly than his own direct and vigorous wife.

Ah (she thought) if only he would see things in the proper light. If only I could make him fight as I would fight in his place! He's innocent, like a little child; but it's not his fault. That old man abovestairs is to blame; that old devil who never cared for his own children. And, goaded by these thoughts, a kind of baffled rage at Gramp Tolliver swept the honest woman. She had no subtle way of combating his deviltries, because to a woman of so violent a nature, indifference was an unconquerable barrier. Gramp Tolliver lived, in his sinister fashion, in a world which she not only failed to understand but even to imagine.

Suddenly Ellen ceased her music; it died away in a faint, diminishing breath, disappearing slowly into silence beneath the strong beautiful fingers. The girl leaned forward on the piano and buried her face silently in her hands. She did not sob, and yet one could be sure that she was miserable. In her silence there was something far more terrible than weeping. It rose up and filled all the room, so that Mrs. Tolliver, lost in her angry thoughts of the old man in the lonely room overhead, sensed it suddenly and ceased her darning. This thing had come so often of late to break in upon the happiness of their lives. It was a monster, savage, insatiable. Something more powerful than all of them.

For a time she watched her daughter and slowly there spread over her face a look of trouble and bewilderment. It was an expression which of late had come to Mrs. Tolliver so often that

it had begun already to leave its mark in the fine lines about her eyes and at the corners of her mouth. It was at times like this that her heart ceased all at once to beat and a coldness swept through her body; for love with her was really an intense and physical thing.

On the sofa her husband slept peacefully, quieted at last by the Liebestraum; and again she resented his indifference, all his willingness to accept life, his refusal to struggle against fate. "Things come out right in the end," he always said when she assailed him. "There is no use in struggling."

Ah, she thought bitterly, but there *is* use in struggling. There is a satisfaction to the spirit. But this, of course, her husband could never have known.

"Ellen," she murmured, "Ellen." And the girl raised her head with a look in her eyes so terrible that it appalled her mother. "Are you tired?"

"No."

Again a little pause. "Why are you unhappy?"

For an instant the face of the girl softened. There were signs of a sudden collapse, of sobbing, of yielding utterly. Perhaps if it had come in that moment—a sudden abrupt bursting of all restraint—the lives of all the people in that warm and comfortable room would have been changed. But it did not come, for one so young does not yield so easily. The girl sighed, stiffened her body and sat upright.

"I don't know," she answered dully. And yet she lied, because she did know, perfectly. In that moment life for her was an awful thing, baffling, suffocating, overwhelming. It was impossible to say so, because her mother would not have understood. It would have been the same as when Mrs. Tolliver said, "It is beautiful, your music . . . lovely," when she did not understand it at all, when she said such things simply because she loved her daughter and was proud of her cleverness.

Outside the storm persisted, increasing steadily in fury. And presently, Ellen said, "To-night Cousin Lily arrives, doesn't she?"

At which her mother regarded her sharply and paused in her darning to say, "Yes. But why do you ask? You talk of nothing but Lily."

And again Ellen answered, "I don't know. I simply want to see her."

Into the proud reflections of Mrs. Tolliver there entered from time to time thoughts of the most profound satisfaction over the part she had played in the existence of her children. In the beginning, even before they were born, she had determined for them careers which were to follow clearly demarcated lines. As a bride, after she had brought up her eight brothers and sisters and married at last the patient Charles Tolliver, she went, driven by eager duty, to a lecture given by a bearded man upon the things every mother should know. This doctor had told her that it was possible to begin even before birth to influence the characters of one's children, and so she had begun on that very night to plan their lives:

The first, she had decided, was to be a musician. It was a story which went back a long way into the days of Hattie Tolliver's own youth when she had longed in her passionate way to be a musician. But always there had been something to intervene—an invalid mother; and after her death the cares of a family of brothers and sisters and the management of her father's household, no easy task in those early days of great farms and broad lands. Yet in spite of these things she had managed to learn by sheer persistence something of the mysteries of the keyboard, and out of these she had woven on the melodeon of the old farmhouse the tunes of a few hymns, the Ninety and Nine, and snatches of The Blue Danube. So before Ellen was born, these fragments were revived and brought into service once more to be played over and over again on the upright piano purchased in the early years of her husband's prosperity. Thus, with the support of a

vast energy and an overwhelming optimism, she had begun to plan the future of Ellen long before the girl was born.

Long before midnight the two boys, under the gentle urgency of their mother, had drifted sleepily to bed. Ellen remained, still playing, almost mournfully now with a kind of moving and tragic despair. Beyond the frozen windows the wind howled wildly and the snow piled against the wall of the house. Mrs. Tolliver darned savagely, with short, passionate stitches, because the thing of which she lived in constant terror had returned to come between her soul and that of Ellen.

On the great sofa, her husband snored gently.

At midnight she rose and, poking the ashes of the fire, she said to Ellen, "It's time we were all asleep. Lock up and I'll get papa to bed."

The transference of Mr. Tolliver from the sofa to his bed was nightly an operation lasting many minutes. When Ellen returned, her mother still stood by the sofa urging her husband gently to stir himself.

"Please, papa," she said, "come along to bed. It's after midnight."

There was a series of final complaints and slowly the gentle Mr. Tolliver sat up, placed his feet on the floor, yawned and made his way sleepily to the stairway. The mother turned off the gas and the room suddenly was bathed in the warm, mellow glow of the dying fire. Ellen, breathing against the frozen window pane, cleared a tiny space to look out upon the world. It stretched before her, white and mysterious, beckoning and inscrutable. And suddenly she saw far down the street the figure of a cab drawn by a skinny horse which leaned black against the slanting snow within the halo of a distant street lamp.

The mother joined her, watching the cab for an instant and murmuring at length, "I wonder who it could be at this time of night."

"I know," said Ellen softly. "It's Mr. Murdock. He was

coming to-night on the express to stay with the Setons. He must have come on the same train with Lily."

At the mention of Lily, her mother turned away. Ellen followed her and in the doorway Mrs. Tolliver halted abruptly and embraced her child, fiercely as if she would hold her thus forever. For an instant they clung together in the warm darkness and presently Mrs. Tolliver murmured, "Tell me, darling. . . . If you have any secrets, tell them to me. I'm your mother. Whatever happens to you happens to me."

Ellen did not reply at once. For an instant she was silent, thoughtful. When at last she spoke, it was to say dully, "I haven't any." But the tears came suddenly into her blue eyes. She was lying, for she had her secrets. They were the secrets which youth finds it impossible to reveal because they are too precious. All the evening she had not been in the comfortable, firelit room. She had been far away in some vague and gigantic concert hall where people listened breathlessly while she made music that was moving and exquisite. The faces stretched out before her dimly in a half-light until in the farthest rows they were blurred and no longer distinguishable. And when she finished they cheered her and she had gone proudly off to return again and again as they crowded nearer to the great stage.

After the mother and daughter had climbed the creaking stairs, both lay awake for a long time, the one entangled in her wild and glowing dreams, the other terrified by the unseen thing which in her primitive way she divined with such certainty. It was not to be seen; she could not understand it, yet it was there menacing, impregnable.

And in a distant part of the house, a light was put out suddenly and Gramp Tolliver thrust his skinny legs between the blankets. All this time he had remained awake listening to the beauty of the music which came to him distantly above the wild howling of the storm. He was sure now of his secret. He could have

told Hattie Tolliver what it was that shut her out from the soul of her precious daughter. It was something that would keep the girl lonely so long as she lived. Gramp Tolliver knew about such things.

So at last all the house fell into sleep. Outside there lay a vast desert of white which, it seemed, began at the very walls of the warm shabby house and extended thence to the very ends of the world. Even the tracks, left a little while before by the passing of the cab which brought Clarence Murdock through the blizzard, were obliterated now. One might have said that he had not passed that way at all.

II

WHEN the cab bearing Clarence drew up at length before the heavy portals of the Seton house, there was a light still burning in the room with the filigreed wallpaper. Leaving the bony horse and the smelly vehicle behind him, Clarence stumbled through the storm and pulled the bell. Far away, deep inside the house, it tinkled dismally in response, and presently there arose from within the sound of bodies sleepily setting themselves in motion to prepare a welcome. Mr. Seton himself opened the door, tall, bony, forbidding behind his thin whiskers, cold as the storm yet not so fresh or so dry. There was always a distinct dampness hanging about him, even in the touch of his hand.

"Well, well," he said in his hollow voice, "you're almost a stranger."

Behind him in a row stood Mrs. Seton, fat and obviously sleepy, and May who interspersed her giggles with yawns which she attempted to conceal with a refined hand. And last of all there was the anemic Jimmy, not at all sleepy, and fidgeting as usual, this time with the cord of the red plush portières which he kept pulling to and fro until halted in this pastime by his mother,

who said, "Come, dear, you mustn't do that just when Mr. Murdock is arriving. Step forward and shake Mr. Murdock's hand like a little gentleman."

So Jimmy shook hands in a fashion which he had been taught was the very peak of gentility.

As for Clarence, the whole scene proved much less warm, much less vivid than he had pictured it. Somehow those dreams with which his day had begun were now dissipated, indeed almost lost in all that had happened since then. In the greeting there was a certain barrenness, intangible yet apparent. It may have been the dimness of the hall that depressed him, for Mr. Seton never permitted more than a faint flicker of gas in the red glass chalice which hung suspended by Moorish chains from the ceiling.

"Yes," said Mrs. Seton, "you're almost one of the family with us. May has talked of nothing else but your coming."

May wriggled a little and added, "Yes, we're glad you've come."

And Clarence, dropping his bag, shook the snow from his coat. He could find no answer that seemed appropriate. How could one answer such greetings? Somehow he had expected, after his journey through the wild storm, something of warmth; and there was only this strange, damp confusion, strained and inexplicable. In the room with the filigreed wall-paper there burned the remnants of a fire; it was clear that Mr. Seton had permitted it to die down for the night.

They asked him about his trip, whether the train had been delayed by the blizzard, which of the cab drivers he had engaged. He did not know the name of his driver, yet he was able to identify him because he had heard the name of the other one. (*"I've known Jerry all my life. . . . He has driven me ever since I was a little girl."*)

"Jerry. . . . Jerry was the name of the other driver," Clarence announced suddenly, as if, not having heard their talk, he had brought his mind by some heroic effort back from a great distance.

Mrs. Seton said, "I can see Mr. Murdock is very tired. We mustn't keep him up. . . . Mr. Seton will show you your room."

So Clarence bade them good night and, led by his soft-footed host, made his way through the dark halls until the corset manufacturer opened a door and admitted him to a room that was damp with the chill of a tomb. The sudden flicker of the gas revealed an enormous bed with the cotton sheets turned back.

"Here," said Mr. Seton, with a contracted gesture of the hand intended clearly to be hospitable. "You will find it a little chilly in the spare room, but it is a cold night. Once you're in bed it'll be warm enough."

Clarence murmured polite protests and Mr. Seton withdrew, closing the door behind him. The sound of its closing had a curious effect upon Clarence. For a moment he was tempted to turn suddenly, fling it open and run for his life. Why he should have experienced this impulse he did not know. The whole sensation was confused, disturbing, a part of the wretchedness which had overcome him as he saw the stranger enter her cab and drive off in the direction of the great black house among the flaming mills. He had visited this house before . . . many times. He knew the habits of its owners. They had not changed. It was clear that the trouble lay hidden in himself. Something had happened to him, something quite outside his neat and pigeon-holed calculations. He had come prepared to win success and a comfortable wife, and now . . . instead of that there was fear of something vague and indefinable, a curious instinct to escape from some dreadful trap.

For a time he sat quietly on a stiff chair, his overcoat thrown across his knees, trying to discover the cause of his uneasiness. It was entangled in some strange way with the woman of the veil. *The Setons. . . . I know who they are although I don't know them. And then, I'm careful who I speak to. . . . I knew I should be safe with you.*

Certainly he was not in love with her. Such a thing had never

occurred to him. She was too remote, too far beyond even the wildest flights of his rarely erratic imagination.

And presently, shivering, he began to undress. With the routine of this daily act, he began at once to grow more calm and more assured. One by one, as he took each article from his pocket—a pen, a pencil, a pocketknife, the watch Uncle Henry had given him on his twenty-first birthday for never having touched tobacco, a few coins—the disturbing sensations seemed to loose their subtle hold. As he laid these things in turn on the mantelpiece beneath the chromo of Watts' Hope, it seemed that he deposited with each of them a fear, an uneasiness, a premonition; the breath-taking sense of grand adventure oozed out of his finger tips.

At length he hung his coat and waistcoat over the back of the chair, placed his shoes beneath the bed and his trousers, carefully folded (to preserve the neat creases that meant so much in the world of himself and Mr. Bruce) beneath the mattress. In the flickering gaslight his body looked pinched and cold, as if he suffered from a lack of warm blood. He was a muscular little man, but his muscles were hard and tight and knotty, the muscles of a man whose only exercise was taken each morning beside the bath tub.

At last after turning out the flickering gas flame, he slipped, shivering and gasping, into his nightshirt and sprang courageously into the monumental bed. Seldom used, it was like the room, dampish and chilly, but before long the warmth of his body permeated the cotton sheets and, coupled with the sound of the wild storm outside, it filled him with a certain comfort which lulled him presently to sleep. In the air-tight room he slept with his mouth opened a little, his teeth exposed, so that in breathing he made a faint wheezing noise.

THE snow lingered for days, blackening slowly under a downpour of soot from the Mills that penetrated even the distant reaches of the old Town where the Tollivers and the Setons had their houses. Throughout the Flats where the aliens lived and in the park of Shane's Castle it lay soft and thick as if a great and infernal blizzard had passed that way in a thick downfall of sable flakes. With the return of Lily, the old house set in the midst of the furnaces took on a new aspect. Lights glowed once more behind the diamond-shaped panes and the sound of music sometimes penetrated the tottering walls of the filthy houses where the steel workers dwelt. It was gay, triumphant music, for Lily was one whom the Town had never conquered. Any passer-by could have told that she had returned. . . .

The days passed slowly and meanwhile Ellen made no effort to see her cousin. This Mrs. Tolliver observed with astonishment, setting it down in her hopeful way as proof that the restlessness was passing out of her stormy Ellen; but she did not remark upon it because she feared the mere sound of Lily's name. There was something about Lily which made even Mrs. Tolliver uneasy; it was impossible to understand this woman who denied the existence of the Town, who could return to it when she chose out of a life which it was whispered was none too respectable, to dominate the townspeople again and again in her own disarming, pleasant fashion. In a vague way Lily stood for that vast land beyond the Mills which held such terror for the soul of the simple woman. It was as if Lily were a menace, as if there could be no peace, no contentment until she had gone back again into that vague and distant world from which she came. And here once more Mrs. Tolliver failed to understand. She did not see that Ellen, for all her stiff-necked pride, was shy and held by the same uncertain fear. It was a fear that Clarence Murdock knew.

Somehow it had touched him and changed alike himself and the world about him. It was the fear of naïve souls for one that was perhaps not good but one that was experienced, that moved through life with a sure step, without fear for those things which would have terrified the less courageous. The soul of Mrs. Tolliver was simple. The soul of Clarence was small, and that of Ellen had not begun to grow; until now, save as a bundle of wild desires and feverish unrest, it had not been born.

At length came Christmas day when it was no longer possible for Ellen to avoid her cousin. For seventy years this day had been set aside in the clan composed of the Barrs, the Tollivers and the Shanes as a day given over to feasting, an occasion which brought the most remote members of the great family from every part of the county to the black house among the Mills. But the seventy years had wrought changes. The great house that once raised its bulk, proud and aloof on its hill amid the marsh land, now stood surrounded and blackened by the great mills and factories. Of the family only nine gathered about a table which once had seated forty. The old ones were dying off, slowly; the younger ones had gone away, all save Hattie Tolliver and her children, Irene Shane, and a spinster cousin, the daughter of the Samuel Barr who died after inventing the celebrated and useless perpetual motion machine.

Of the older generation only two remained . . . the proud old Julia Shane and her brother-in-law Jacob Barr, the father of Mrs. Tolliver. This old man was an extraordinary character who at eighty still had a powerful stalwart figure and a great rosy face framed in white hair and a white beard which once had been red. In his youth the people of the county had called him The Red Scot and marveled at the superb strength of his great body. There were tales of his having moved his log barn alone and unaided when the men who were to have helped him failed to arrive at the appointed time. When at last they came, so the

story ran, they found Jacob Barr mopping his great, handsome face by the side of the windlass and the barn moved a full hundred yards from the spot it once occupied. At eighty he still managed his farm and scorned his daughter's offer of care. He was the last of the pioneers.

There were times when this grandfather seemed even more remote to Ellen than old Gramp Tolliver in his cell lined with musty books; for the remoteness of Grandpa Barr was the remoteness of one who dwelt in a tower of unbending virtue. In the county he had been the first abolitionist, the first prohibitionist, the first advocate of woman suffrage. He had organized the Underground Railroad which aided slaves to escape to Canada. He was a Presbyterian without sympathy for those who were weak. His wife had died in bearing him child after child. For Gramp Tolliver his scorn was so profound that it was beyond all expression in words. He never spoke of Gramp Tolliver at all.

Jacob Barr was a citizen. He had what people called "backbone," and Ellen was not his granddaughter for nothing.

There was in this annual dinner a pomp, a circumstance that approached the medieval; it was a rite which symbolized the pride, the greatness of a family which admitted no weakness, no failure, no poverty; the persistence of a family which, because it lived sometimes in dreams when the reality became insupportable, knew no such thing as failure. What one does not admit, does not exist. This one sentence might indeed have stood above the crest of the clan. If Hattie Tolliver knew in her heart that Lily was a feeble reed, she ignored it. In her presence none would have dared to hint at such frailty; for Lily existed within the sacred barrier of the family.

On Christmas day, the guests arrived in a procession . . . first Grandpa Barr, rugged, handsome, defiant of his years, yet yielding through bitter necessity to the stout stick of cherry wood which he carried; Mrs. Tolliver, large, powerful, vigorous in a shabby

astrakhan jacket, a beaver tippet and a small hat covered with ostrich plumes slightly frayed by age; Charles Tolliver, gentle, handsome, pleasant in his neat and faintly threadbare clothes; Ellen, stiff-necked, awkward, yet somehow handsome and overpowering and, last of all, the two brothers, Fergus, gentle, charming like his father and Robert, stocky and for all the world like the fierce, blue-eyed old Scot with his cherry stick. A vigorous family. And in the midst marched Mrs. Tolliver, erect and with a strange dignity, her plumes nodding a little as if she were a field marshal surrounded by a glorious army.

But Gramp Tolliver was nowhere to be seen. He had been left behind to have his Christmas meal alone in the room walled in by books. Gramp Tolliver, who never worked, who had wrought nothing in this world, was a disgrace which one did not air in public. He took his place among the things which one did not admit.

Before the wrought iron portico of Shane's Castle, the little family defiled across the blackened snow to the heavy door. Mrs. Tolliver pulled the bell as Hennery, the black servant, drove off the sleigh drawn by horses which the Tollivers had for their keep since the latest débâcle in family fortunes. Ellen, trembling a little, perhaps at the thought of the cousin who awaited her inside the long, beautiful drawing-room, perhaps at the fear of the thing she had to ask of Lily, stood leaning against the iron railing, gazing out across the furnaces that flamed even on Christmas day below the eminence of the dying park.

Inside the house there was a distant tinkle and the door swung open presently to reveal Sarah, the mulatto housekeeper, and behind her a long hallway, hung with silver mounted mirrors and a chandelier of crystal that reflected its dull light against the long, polished stairway. For in the Flats, where the Mills reigned, the darkness was so great that lights burned even at midday in Shane's Castle.

Once inside, there was the rustle of descending coats. Before the mirror Mrs. Tolliver frizzed her hair and Ellen patted the

newborn pompadour. Beneath her coat she wore a starched white shirtwaist and a skirt of blue voile, with a tight belt and a contrivance known as a chatelaine dangling and jingling at one side. The Town called her well-dressed. It marveled that she could afford such clothes, although it knew well enough that they came from Hattie Tolliver's sewing machine. Yet she was ridiculous and in the next moment she knew it.

For as she turned there moved toward her out of the old drawing-room, that glittered softly in the reflected light of the candles upon mirror and bits of crystal and silver, the figure of Lily, whom she had not seen in seven years. Her cousin wore a gown of black stuff, exquisitely cut by the hand of some artist in the establishment of Worth, a gown which came from the other side of the earth, from a street known to every corner of the world. Her fine bronze hair she wore drawn back over her ears in a knot at the back of her beautiful head; about her throat close against the soft skin hung a string of pearls. As she moved there came from her the faint scent of mimosa, which smote the quivering nostrils of Ellen as some force strange and exotic yet almost recognizable. It was a perfume which she was never able to forget and one which so long as she lived exerted upon her a curious softening power. Years afterward as she passed the flower carts behind the Madeleine or moved along the Corniche above the unreal terraces of Nice the faint scent of mimosa still had the power of making her suddenly sad, even wistful . . . and those were the years when she had conquered the world, when she was hard.

Now she only trembled a little and offered her hand awkwardly to the smiling cousin.

"Well," said Lily, "and now, Ellen, you're a woman. To think of it! When I last saw you, you were a little girl with pigtails."

Her voice carried that thin trace of accent which Clarence had noticed. Somehow it made her strangeness, her glamour, overpowering; and thus it strengthened the very barrier which to Ellen seemed so impossible ever to pass. In that moment there

rushed through the confused brain of the awkward girl a multitude of thoughts, but out of them only one emerged clearly defined. "Ah, if I could be like that, I would not care what people thought of me! To be so free, so certain, so gracious, to overcome every one so easily!"

For all Lily's warmth the talk was not easy between them. Yet for the first time it seemed to Ellen that the door stood open a little way. It was as if already she looked out upon the world.

And then Lily turned away to speak to the others, smiling, disarming them, even Grandpa Barr, who in the isolation of his virtue glared secretly at her from beneath his shaggy brows, suspecting her as that which was too pleasant to be good.

And Ellen, with a wildly beating heart, turned to gaunt Aunt Julia Shane, who, leaning on her ebony stick and dressed all in black with amethysts, shook her hand harshly and disapproved of her pompadour.

"It is a silly thing the way girls disfigure themselves nowadays," she said. But Ellen did not mind.

The old woman was handsome in a fierce, cold fashion and had the Barr nose, slightly curved, and intolerably proud, which had appeared again in this awkward great-niece of hers.

Then there was Irene to greet . . . Aunt Julia Shane's other daughter, given to charity and good works, thin, anemic, slightly withered, so different from the radiant, selfish Lily. Irene Ellen ignored, because Irene stood for a life which, it seemed to Ellen, it was best to forget. And beyond Irene there was the horse-faced Eva Barr, daughter of the perpetual motion machine, a terrifying spinster of forty-five who regarded Lily as obscene and spoke of Ellen as a "chit." Both of them she hated passionately for their freedom, because to her it was a thing forever lost. She, like Miss Ogilvie, had been trapped by another tradition. It was too late now. . . .

In the dark lovely room, all these figures passed before Ellen,

but of them all, she saw only Lily who stood now before the fire of cannel coal beneath the glowing Venice painted by Mr. Turner. She was like the picture, and shared its warmth, its graciousness, its unreal, extravagant beauty.

Ellen in her dark corner savagely bit her lip. She would escape same day and herself see Venice. Lily should help her. Every one should help her. And into her handsome young face, beneath the absurd, ratted pompadour, there stole a look of determination so fierce that Irene, seeing it, was frightened, and old Julia Shane, seeing it, exulted in the spirit of this great-niece of hers.

13

In another part of the Town far on the Hill above the Flats, the Setons and their guest sat down to Christmas dinner at an hour somewhat earlier than that kept at Shane's Castle, for Harvey Seton, in the manner of many men who have made their own success, created social laws for himself, as if in some way he could thus place himself above the rules. Certainly he could not have brought himself to follow the fashions set by Shane's Castle. He was, he said, a simple man and hoped to remain so until he died.

The shadow of this unspoken defiance appeared to cloud the cheer of Christmas Day at the Setons. There was in the air a certain conscious tension, a vague uneasiness which manifested itself in a dozen ways . . . in the unflinching frown of the father, in the extreme politeness of the mother, in the nervous and concentrated giggles of May herself. The most uneasy of them all was the guest himself. Alone of all the group the simian Jimmy appeared to enjoy himself; and in this there was nothing strange or unusual, for it was an atmosphere in which he flourished and one to which he was highly sensitized. With the sharpness of a sickly, precocious nature, he understood that the air about him

was heavy with foreboding. He knew that it required but a spark to precipitate a crisis with all the suddenness of an explosion. He waited now, joyful, expectant, watching the others with an impish satisfaction.

There was in the dampish atmosphere of the room an odor of unwonted richness . . . the smell of a roast goose, strange and exotic in this household. But Christmas was a season which caused even Harvey Seton to unbend a little. It was the only occasion when the Christianity of the man was tempered even for an instant by anything faintly suggestive of warmth. His manner as he carved was touched, despite the thinness of the slices which fell from the breast of the bird, by a majestic air, which suggested more than ever his likeness to a grotesque Gothic saint; (he might have been one of those early fathers who battled and gave up their lives for some minute point of dogma.)

As he stood whetting the knife coldly against the steel, a sense of awe penetrated slowly one by one the hearts of those about the table . . . all save Jimmy. With his small pointed head barely visible above the table's edge, he waited. And presently, as if he could restrain his impatience no longer, he banged his knife sharply against the edge of his plate.

The effect was instantaneous. It brought from the harassed mother a sharp scream and a violent slap on the wrist.

"Don't do that again or you'll be sent to bed without any goose!"

But Jimmy, knowing his safety, only grinned and varied the method of torture by scratching the fork against the cold surface of the plate so that it produced a dreadful whining sound.

There were, to be sure, reasons for this strange condition of nerves. Since the night when Clarence arrived out of the blizzard, things had not progressed. Indeed, it appeared that, on the contrary, they were moving backwards. By now, everything should have been settled, and yet nothing was done; there had been no declaration. no hint. The wooer remained wary, suspi-

cious; and the consciousness of his failure penetrated even the sluggish workings of May's brain and hurt her pride. Mrs. Seton it baffled. She was conscious that some event, some obstacle, some peril which she was unable to divine had raised itself during these past few days full in the middle of her path.

"My," said May presently, "it's much warmer. I expect it's the January thaw."

Then the silence descended and again there was only the whine of Jimmy's fork and the metallic click of the carving knife against the plated dish which bore the goose.

As for Clarence, he managed to conceal that wavering sense of uncertainty and terror which had assailed him with increasing force as the visit progressed. It was a terror which, strangely enough, centered itself in the father, for Clarence, in his chivalrous fashion, regarded women as creatures whom one could put aside. Never having been assailed, he had no fear of them. But the face of the Methodist elder, slightly green and intensely forbidding, filled him with uneasiness. When the corset manufacturer turned to address him, the fishy eyes accused him of unspeakable things.

In all those days in the dampish house there had been no mention of the encounter aboard the transcontinental express. If Lily Shane had been a light woman with whom (Heaven forbid!) Clarence had spent the night, he could have been no more silent concerning the adventure. Somehow he understood that the very name of Lily Shane had no place in the household of the Setons. And the longer he kept silent, the more glamorous and wicked the secret had become, until now it had attained the proportions of a monstrous thing. Each time the Elder looked at him the offense increased a degree or two in magnitude.

Yet in the end he betrayed himself. Perhaps it was the strained silence, perhaps the unbearable whine of Jimmy's fork against the cold plate. In any case there came a moment when even Clarence could bear the strained silence no longer. He knew that something must be said. What he chose to say was

calamitous and no sooner had the words passed his lips than he knew his error.

He said, "Do you know a woman called Lily Shane? I met her on the train."

It was purely an effort at conversation; he knew well enough that they knew her, but the effect was terrific. Mr. Seton's carving halted in mid-air. The mouth of Mrs. Seton went down at the corners. May giggled nervously and Jimmy, sensing triumph, raised himself until he displayed several inches of skinny neck above the table's edge.

"Yes," said Mr. Seton in a hollow voice, "we know about her. She is not a good woman." What he said was mild enough, yet it carried overtones of the unspeakable, of bacchanalian orgies, of debauchery. And the mother, seeing her chance, took it.

"She is not nice, you know. There are things about her . . ." She would have gone on but a look from her husband halted her. It was a look which said, "We do not discuss such women before May and Mr. Murdock." So Mrs. Seton coughed and suppressed her revelations. Instead she made a conversational step aside. "I suppose she looks old and worn now. A woman leading that sort of life always pays in the end."

At this point Clarence, like a plumed knight, went to the defense of the damozel. "No, I wouldn't say that. She seemed quite young and beautiful." And then as if he had gone too far, he added mildly, "Of course, I don't know her well."

"It's better to avoid women like her," rejoined the father. "Take a word of advice from an older man. Women like that can ruin men . . . just by talking to them. They are creatures of the Devil."

Somewhere within the mind of Clarence a great light broke, and he saw everything clearly. He understood then that all the visit differed from his expectations not because the Setons had changed but because he had encountered Lily Shane. . . . She lay at the root of the trouble. Yes, women like her were powerful. There was no denying it.

The talk came easily enough now. Mrs. Seton, following her instincts, saw an opportunity to destroy the single menace which she fancied stood between her and her success. "She is a cousin, you know, of Ellen . . . that Tolliver girl. They all have bad blood in 'em."

But she had taken a false turning and, though she never knew it, her implications were in their effect fatal. Without understanding it she brought into the room both Ellen and her cousin Lily Shane, and Clarence saw them there, aloof and proud, more clearly than he had ever seen them in the flesh. He saw in them the same qualities, the assurance, the subtle, bedeviling recklessness, the outward indifference that concealed beneath it things undreamed of.

And then May giggled, nervously, as if she were smirking at the veiled improprieties which her mother kept concealed. The sound was more terrible than the scraping of the fork against the cold plate, for suddenly May stood revealed, and Clarence, in the nicety of his soul, was horrified.

"I couldn't tell you the whole story," continued Mrs. Seton. "Perhaps Mr. Seton could. I think you ought to know."

But the thoughts of Clarence had wandered away from the little group, away from the goose and cranberry sauce on his plate. Indeed they had wandered a long way, for they were centered now on the great black house he had seen for an instant high above the flames of the furnaces, so distant, so unattainable. In his mind he had created a picture of the house, of what sort of a dinner must be in progress within its sooty, decaying walls. It was a picture, to be sure, far more magnificent than the reality and therefore more fatal to his happiness. The old ambitions began to stir once more, ponderously and terribly.

And far away he heard May saying, "She doesn't stay much in the Town. She thinks it isn't good enough for her." And then following the cue of so bad a campaigner as her mother, "Neither

does Ellen. "They're both stuck up. They think there's nothing good enough for them in the Town."

"You'd think," rejoined Mrs. Seton, "to see Ellen in her home-made clothes that she was a princess!"

A fierce resentment, bordering upon savagery, colored her voice. In the course of the conversation the fat, complacent woman became transformed into a spiteful, witch-like creature. And in the brain of Clarence there echoed a soft voice which said, "*Ah, the Setons! To be sure, I know who they are but I don't know them,*" dismissing them all quite easily, without resentment, without savagery, even without thought, forgetting in the next moment their very existence.

And then the lightning struck.

The shrill voice of Jimmy, impatient of results, suddenly cut the dampish air like a knife. "I know what it is! She's had a baby and she was never married! . . . She's had a baby and she was never married!"

14

DUSK had already fallen and the black servants had placed silver candlesticks among the wreckage of the Christmas feast before the first chair was drawn back with a scraping sound in the paneled dining room of Shane's Castle.

Throughout the long dinner, Ellen sat silent and somewhat abashed, eating little, hearing nothing, not even the family talk which each year followed the same course, rambling backward into reminiscences of the Civil War and of Grandpa Barr's adventure to the Gold Coast in the Forties. Even when the old man, lost in a torrent of sweeping memories, described with flashing blue eyes and the resonant voice of youth the jungle tapestries of Panama and a terrible shipwreck off the Cocos Islands, Ellen did not raise her head. It was not these things which interested her;

they were too far away and she was still too young, too egoistic, to understand the burning romance that lay in them.

It was only Lily who interested her, and with Lily she had been able to make no progress. Her cousin was placed opposite her, between Charles Tolliver and his son Fergus; and between these two Lily divided her attention, save in those moments when the stentorian tones of the Red Old Scot drowned all conversation. Even the boy she addressed with as much charm and as much interest as if he had been the most fascinating of men; and Fergus, young though he was, had been affected. His clear blue eyes, half-hidden by dark lashes, glowed with a naïve pleasure. Ellen, watching the pair, understood suddenly that this brother, so fascinated by the woman beside him, would one day escape as Lily had escaped. It was easy for him; it was easy for any man. For a girl to escape was a different matter. Yet, sitting there wrapped in despair, she planned how she might help him if she were the first to make her way into the world.

For Fergus exerted upon her a strange effect of softening. His fanciful mind she alone understood, and there were times in the long winter evenings when it was to him alone that she played her savage music. His shyness, which, unlike hers, lacked all the quality of savagery, aroused in her a fierce instinct of protection. There were times when the sight of his clear eyes, his blond curly head and snub nose filled her with an unaccountable melancholy and foreboding.

Sometimes during the dinner Ellen turned at the sound of a loud, rasping voice to regard her cousin Eva Barr, who sat by the side of Irene discussing harshly their work among the poor. Something about the horse-faced spinster filled her with a vague terror. It was as if Eva Barr stood as a symbol of that which a courageous, strong-minded woman might become if kept too long imprisoned. To Ellen, turning these things over secretly in her mind, it seemed that the way of her own destiny lay before her, branching now into two paths. At the end of the one stood the glowing Lily and at the end of the other Eva Barr, baffled

sour, dogmatic, driving herself with a fierce energy into good works.

In a sudden access of pity and sorrow, for herself as much as for Eva Barr and old Miss Ogilvie, the tears welled in her eyes and dropped to the starched front of her shirtwaist. But she dried them, quickly and proudly, before they were seen, with the handkerchief she kept in the jangling chatelaine at her waist.

Ah, she saw everything very clearly . . . even the tragedy of her mother, so contented at this moment, in the midst of all her family, talking in her rich, vigorous voice to bitter old Julia Shane. Yet there was no way of saving any one, of changing anything. By some profound and feminine instinct, the girl knew this and it made her weep silently. . . . Ellen, who people said was so proud and had no heart.

Thus all her plans for seeking help from Lily were dissipated. If she had been less proud, she might, by an heroic effort, have approached her cousin saying, "You must give me money . . . lend it to me. Some day I will pay you back, for I will be rich, powerful. You must help me to do what I know I must do." But she found herself incapable of speaking the words, because the pride of a poverty which has been trained to show an indifferent face was too deeply planted in her. She would ask anything else . . . anything. She could not ask for money.

It was Lily herself who, all unconsciously, closed the matter once and for all. As the family, much wrapped in coats and furs against the cold, stood in the dark hallway making their farewells, she drew Ellen aside and, placing a friendly arm about the waist of the girl, said, "You play superbly, Ellen. If you can play always as you have played to-day, you will be a great artist." And then in a whisper, almost furtive, she said, "You must not throw it away. It is too great a gift. And don't let them make you settle into the pattern of the Town. It's what they'll try to do, but don't let them. We only live once, Ellen. Don't waste your life. . . . And when the time comes, if you want to come

and study in Paris with the great Philippe, you can live with me." For a moment, the girl blushed and regarded the floor silently. "I won't let them," she managed to murmur presently. "Thank you, cousin Lily." It was all that she was able to say.

And when she stepped through the doorway into the cold air, the flames above the furnaces were blurred before her glistening eyes. Lily had promised Paris. That was something; but Paris was a long way off and the road between was certain to be hard.

15

THE heavy snow lasted until the day before the New Year when the weather, turning suddenly, sent it slithering away down the gutters of the Town in streams of black water to swell the volume of the Black Fork so that in the Flats, where the stream meandered a tortuous course, it overflowed its banks and filled the cellars of the hovels with stinking damp. It was through this malodorous area that the fastidious carriages of the Town made their way on New Year's Eve to the eminence crowned by Shane's Castle, aglow now with the lights that had flashed into existence upon the arrival of Lily. Kentucky thoroughbreds picked their way daintily through the streaming gutters, drawing behind them the old families of the Town and one or two of the new, for the Shanes, the Barrs and the Tollivers did not, save in cases of rare distinction, admit the existence of the new. Consequently there was no carriage bearing a member of the Seton family. It was this circumstance, far more perhaps than any other, which had precipitated the dinner table crisis of Christmas Day. And its consequences had not ended there; they were destined once more to enter into the existence of Clarence Murdock.

On the same New Year's Eve at about the hour when the gaiety in the house among the mills, centering itself about the re-

turned prodigal, had reached its height, Mrs. Seton, with a rustling of her voile skirts, drew May off to bed. Even the persistent Jimmy was swept with them, so that Clarence, left conspicuously alone with the father, understood that some event of grave importance had been arranged. Indeed, the manner of the corset manufacturer made his divination doubly sure. The man poked the remnants of the fire to make certain that it was entirely consumed before he retired, and then faced his guest.

Clarence, opposite him in a stiff backed chair of mahogany veneer, stirred with a sense of impending doom. The green eyes of his host fastened upon him with the old implication of guilt. From one corner of his narrow mouth there hung, limply, an unlighted and rather worn cigar which had done service all the day.

"I've been thinking it over," he said presently in his cold, deliberate voice. "I thought perhaps we'd better talk over a few things before you go away for good." A cinder slipping in the grate disturbed the stillness of the room and he continued. "I don't want to hurry you about anything, but it's best to come to an understanding."

In his uncomfortable chair, Clarence, swayed by the cold deliberate manner of the Elder, shifted his position as if he were sitting on a bag of rocks.

"Yes," he managed to articulate, as if he knew what was coming. "It's always better."

"First of all," began his host, "there is this matter of the Shane woman. . . . Lily Shane." He coughed and looked into the fire for a long time. And then, "It's a matter I don't care to discuss before May. . . . She's innocent, you know, like a flower. . . . The way girls should be."

"Yes," said Clarence agreeably; but there rang in his ears the horrid memory of May's knowing giggle.

"I don't understand how Jimmy could have found out unless he overheard his mother discussing it," continued the father. "We've always kept such things from the children. My wife and

I are great believers in innocence . . . and purity. It's a fine protection."

A month ago, Clarence would have agreed. Now he murmured, "Yes," politely, but in his heart he felt stirring a faint desire to protest, to deny this assertion. Lately there had come into his mind a certainty that the greatest of all protections lay in knowledge. One could not know too much. Each bit of knowledge was a link in the armor.

"It's true . . . what Jimmy said."

And again there was a silence in which Clarence flushed slowly a deep red.

"We can speak of such things . . . man to man," continued the torturer and slowly there swept over Clarence a terrible sense of becoming involved. Life in the Babylon Arms in the midst of a great and teeming city was simple compared to the complications of these last few days.

"But it doesn't seem to make any difference," he said presently. "All the Town has gone to the ball. . . . I saw the carriages going there . . . a whole stream of them, and it's Lily Shane who is giving it."

For an instant, Harvey Seton remained silent, turning the worn cigar round and round in his thin lips, as if it might be the very thought he was turning over in much the same fashion in his own devious mind. "Yes," he replied, after a long time. "That's true. But it's because nobody really knows."

At this speech Clarence, moved perhaps by the memory of Lily leaning from the window of the cab as she drove off through the storm, asked, "But do *you* know?"

Slowly his host eyed him with suspicion. It was as if the veiled accusations contained in their depths had suddenly become defined, specific; as if he accused this model young man opposite him of being the father of the vague and suppositious child.

"I have no proofs . . . to be sure," he said. "But a woman like that. . . . Well, to look at her is enough. To look at her in her fine Paris clothes. A woman has no right to make herself a

lure to men. It's like the women of the streets." Then he added gruffly with a sudden glance at the dying fire, "She's always been bad. They're a bad lot . . . the whole family, unstable, not to be relied upon. They go their crazy way . . . all of 'em. Why there was Sam Barr, Lily Shane's uncle, who spent his whole life inventing useless things . . . never making a cent out of 'em. His daughter lives in a cheap boarding house now. . . . If he'd made an honest living instead of mooning about." He laughed scornfully. "Why, he even thought he could invent a perpetual motion machine." Then he halted abruptly as if he realized that he had protested too much, and returned to the main stream of his discourse. "As for the Town going to the ball, all the Town knows just what I know, and they talk about it, only they see fit to ignore it to-night because there is music and good food and champagne punch at Shane's Castle."

In the silence that followed Clarence bent his neatly brushed head and slipped away into a world of philosophy new and strange to him. "Yes," he found himself thinking, "the world is like that and nobody can change it much. If Lily Shane had asked you, you would have gone."

But in this he was unfair to his enemy; Skinflint Seton would not have gone, because he would have taken too great a satisfaction in refusing. It was this satisfaction, undoubtedly, which he now missed so bitterly.

But the turn things had taken exerted upon Clarence a curious effect. It was as if he found himself for the first time on the offensive, as if he were placed now within the ranks of all the others who were at the ball, laughing, dancing, forgetful (as Lily Shane had been) that Harvey Seton even existed. He had begun to lose the feeling of isolation, of being trapped. There appeared in the offing a gleam of hope.

He knew vaguely that it was difficult to deal with this man

who sat opposite him; but he did not understand the reason—that it lay in the very positiveness of his opponent, in the fact that the world of Harvey Seton consisted entirely of blacks and whites. There were in between no soft, warm shades of gray. May was (despite that fatal giggle) innocent as a flower, just as Lily Shane was the apotheosis of sin; and they were so because he willed them to be so. Thus he had created them, knowing his own daughter perhaps no better than he knew Lily Shane.

Clarence looked at him and blushed slowly. The walls began once more to close about him; he was frozen into silence.

"It was about May," Seton repeated slowly. . . . "She's unhappy. . . . At least her mother says she is, and it's on account of you."

In response to this Clarence found nothing to say. He would have protested but there were no words with which to frame a protest. The corset manufacturer bore down upon his victim like a Juggernaut. Clarence could neither speak, nor scream, nor rise from its path.

"I've guessed for a long time that there was something between you two." And here he permitted himself to smirk suddenly with a frigid sentimentality. "I'm not sorry, you understand. . . . Nothing could please me more. I'll need some one to help me in the factory . . . until Jimmy's old enough to take hold."

In his chair before the chilly, dying fire Clarence sat motionless; betraying no sign of the tortured soul that writhed within him.

"But I don't . . ." he began. "I mean . . ."

The Juggernaut rolled on. "I understand your bashfulness," continued his host. "I once had the honor of speaking myself . . . to the fine woman who is now my wife. My boy, there is nothing like a wife. It's the finest step a man can take . . . to settle himself into honorable matrimony." Here he bit a piece from the badly worn cigar and spat it into the ashes of the fire. "I am only speaking to you because I wanted to know if your in-

tentions are honorable. After all, you have been close to us now . . . for a long time, living as one of the family, and under such conditions it is not surprising that a young girl should . . . should have her interest aroused."

By now Clarence managed to speak. He sat upright and with superhuman effort turned upon his torturer.

"My intentions . . ." he began. "My intentions . . ." And then he ended weakly. "Of course they're honorable, sir. What did you think?" It was as if he were in some terrible nightmare in which there was no faint gleam of reality.

"Then," continued the Elder, "a declaration would clear up everything . . . everything. I wouldn't have hurried you except on the girl's account."

It was impossible to believe that this was happening to him—Clarence Murdock—that he was being forced slowly into a life of slavery, of horror, a world of damp cotton sheets and reinforced corsets, of cold piety and stewed mutton. He must fight for time, somehow.

"You know, sir," he heard himself saying from a great distance, "I am bashful. . . . I've meant to propose, but I can't screw up my courage. . . . I've . . . I've meant to all along . . . and then I thought I'd leave it until I went away."

"I have no intention," replied the Elder firmly, "of hurrying things. I only thought that it would make every one easier . . . yourself included."

"I'm going away to-morrow . . . for three days," said Clarence. "When I come back we're going on a skating party if it's cold enough. . . . I'll . . . I'll ask May then if she'll have me."

Harvey Seton rose and came over to him, placing one hand on his shoulder. "That's fine," he said. "May's a fine girl. She'll make you a fine wife." Then he withdrew his hand for an instant and regarded Clarence with his accusing green eyes. "I suppose," he began "there's no reason why you shouldn't marry

her? And at the look of astonishment in the eyes of his guest he continued, "I mean, there's been no other woman . . . you've led a clean, pure life. You are fit to marry such a pure, innocent girl."

By now Clarence had become quite still, with the stillness of one who cannot believe the sensations conveyed by his own nerves. His mouth opened. It closed. At last he stammered, "Why. . . . Why . . . of course there's been no other woman. . . . I don't know anything about women." (And in the back of his mind a still small voice said, "But I'm learning . . . I'm learning.")

Harvey Seton backed away and stood with his lean legs between Clarence and the dead fire. He shook himself suddenly as if the chill had penetrated even his spare frame. "Well, I'm glad to hear that . . . I'm glad to hear that . . . I didn't know. Things are different in a city like New York. . . . And then you talked to Lily Shane. . . ."

"But she spoke to me first. . . ."

"I know . . . I know. I've encountered temptations." And he squared his thin shoulders with the air of St. Anthony resisting all the forces of the Devil. "I know." Then he turned suddenly and raised his arm toward the flickering gas. "It's gettin' chilly in here. . . . We'd best go to bed."

On the way to the door, the father turned in the darkness. "Of course," he said, "you can leave your things here if you're only going to be gone three days. . . . There's no use in lugging all that stuff away with you. . . . You can get it when you come back. . . ." There was a little pause, during which Clarence shuddered silently. "When you come back to propose to May. My, it'll make her happy. You know, she's one of the marryin' kind."

In the mind of Clarence there lingered the memory of that obscure giggle. With this new turn of affairs, it filled him with actual terror.

After he had gone to his room, he stood for a time looking out of the window far across to the other side of the Town. The house stood on a hill so that it overlooked all the wide and flooded expanse of the Flats. It was impossible to have seen Shane's Castle but above the spot where it raised its gloomy pile there was a great glow that filled all the sky. To be sure, it was a glow caused by the flames from the furnaces but it might have come from a great house where there was a ball in progress with music and good food and champagne punch. . . . The glow appeared at length to spread over all the Town and penetrate the very blood of Clarence as he stood there silhouetted against the light. His bony legs shivered beneath his cotton nightshirt; it may have been the cold, or it may have been fright. Clarence himself could not have said which it was.

Presently he lifted the window a little way. Unmistakably it was growing colder. There would be skating in three days. Nothing could alter the course of nature.

16

It was about this time that Gramp Tolliver, as if he scented the imminence of stupendous happenings, began like a long dormant volcano to display signs of activity. Despite the bitter cold and the ice that lay thick upon the pavement, he left his cell and, clad in a beaver cap and a moth-eaten coonskin coat, took to wandering about the streets. This activity Hattie Tolliver observed with apprehension, not alone because of the risk which the glittering pavements placed upon his brittle old bones, but because from long experience she interpreted such behavior as an omen of disaster. Standing in the doorway she watched his daily departure with a hostile eye, knowing well enough that if he did not come to grief, he would return in time for meals; his appetite was the best and on the rare occasions when he undertook any exercise it suffered a consequent augmentation. All the signs were present

at meal time when the noise in the room above the kitchen became more violent and assumed a variety of manifestations. On occasion there was an admirable directness in Gramp Tolliver, not distantly akin to the directness of an elderly tiger at the approach of the feeding hour.

The sight of his grotesque figure, wrapped in furs and perambulating with uncanny skill the slippery places of the street, provided the people of the neighborhood with a divertissement of rare quality. As he passed along the street they took their children to the windows and there pointed out with ominous fingers his figure, saying, "There goes old man Tolliver, a living example of what laziness comes to. A perfect failure in life! Let him be an example to you. . . . Just watch him! If it was a good hard working man like *your* grandfather, children, he would have fallen and broken his leg long ago. But not him! Not old man Tolliver! The devil looks out for him!"

And by that time Gramp Tolliver would have vanished around the next corner to draw new moralists to peer at him from behind the Boston fern that adorned each successive bay window.

Knowing these things, Hattie Tolliver in her respectable heart experienced a certain shame at this frank exposure of Gramp. She would have preferred some other person as a walking example of failure; but there was nothing to be done unless she locked him in his room, and then he might easily have climbed to freedom by way of the grape arbor, a proceeding even more perilous to his brittle limbs than these icy promenades.

Into the midst of Gramp Tolliver's unusual behavior, Ellen returned from Shane's Castle with her appearance altered almost beyond the realms of the imagination. She had stayed with Lily, at the request of her cousin, over the three days following the ball, and now, on her return, it was clear that something stupendous had taken place during the visit.

She came upon her mother without warning in the very midst of a busy morning, and at sight of her Mrs. Tolliver halted her work abruptly and stood staring quietly for a good three minutes,

while Ellen took off her hat and laid aside her coat. It was then that the shock became so great that Mrs. Tolliver broke the silence. She went at once into the heart of things.

"What has Lily done to you? What ideas has she put into your head?"

There was reason for her astonishment; the girl had changed. She appeared older, more mature. The wire rat, that so recently had supported the pompadour which was her pride, had vanished, and her fine black hair lay smooth and close to her head, in a fashion created by a doubtful lady named Cléo de Merode and appropriated not long afterward by Lily Shane. Her corsets, instead of being laced to give her the hourglass figure and the slight stoop forward so cherished in those days, were now worn so indecently loose that the clasps of her flaring skirt no longer fulfilled their mission. She was, according to the standards of the Town, extremely unfashionable in appearance, but she was far more beautiful. She belonged now not to the world of fashion plates fed to small towns by gigantic women's papers, but to a world of her own which had little to do with fashion or convention. Even though there was something ridiculous in her appearance, she had a new dignity. Something of the provinciality had slipped away. It was this, perhaps, which alarmed her mother—as if suddenly the girl had escaped into that horrid world where Lily moved and had her being.

"To think," said Mrs. Tolliver mournfully, "that I sent away my little girl and now she comes back to me a grown woman. That's what Lily has done to you. You aren't my little girl any longer."

To this Ellen made no reply. She stood, somewhat sullenly, as if she implied that there was no answer to such a sentimental observation.

"I suppose it's Lily who had you change your hair."

"I have beautiful hair. Why should I spoil it with a rat?"

"Lily said that. I know she did. . . . I can hear her saying it.

But that doesn't make it right. . . . It's not the fashion, at least not in the Town. And that's where you're living."

For the first time Ellen smiled, in her old secretive fashion, as if she and Lily had entered upon some dark compact.

"It *was* just what Lily said. Rats are silly things, anyway."

"They'll laugh at you," continued her mother, with an air of feeling her way. "Young men don't like girls to be different. It makes them seem eccentric."

Ellen must have known, in her shrewd way, that her mother was not speaking frankly. She knew beyond all doubt that her mother was not concerned with what the young men would think. She was talking thus because she saw these things—the rat, the corsets, the new air—all as signs of something far deeper. She was fighting against the escape of her child, battling to keep her always.

"Yes, they would laugh, wouldn't they?" remarked Ellen presently. And then, quite suddenly, the timbre of her voice changed. "Well, let 'em," she added abruptly.

As if she saw the beginnings of a storm, her mother sighed, turned away and observed casually, "Gramp has started to wander about again. It worries me."

But Ellen swept past her and placing her handbag on the dining room table, she opened it, saying, "Lily gave me some clothes."

"You shouldn't have taken them. I don't want Lily making paupers of us."

"I thought about that," said Ellen with an air of reflection. "But you don't understand Lily. . . . It wasn't like that at all. She doesn't do things that way. . . . She gave them to me as a present, the way she might have given me a book."

For a time there was a silence during which Ellen proceeded with the unpacking of her bag. Reverently, almost with an air of worship, she took out from among her own threadbare clothes

three gowns of superb material and spread them across the table under the gray winter light. One was of black, one of green—the color of deep jade—and the third was the color of flame, so brilliant that in the comfortable shabby room it destroyed all else.

"I'm sorry I let you stay at Shane's Castle," began her mother. "Lily . . . Lily . . ." she halted abruptly and regarded her daughter with suspicion. "She didn't promise you anything, did she?"

Ellen laughed, but through the sound of her soft mirth there ran, like a taut singing wire, the echo of subdued bitterness. "No. At least nothing very definite. . . . She said that when I came to Paris to study I could live with her. We didn't get beyond that."

"But you don't want to go to Paris. . . . It's a wicked city. . . . I thought you'd given all that up long ago."

But Ellen only lifted the flame colored gown and said, "Look at it. Feel it. Isn't it beautiful?" And she ran her hand over the soft brocade with a sensuous air that was new and alarming. "There's nothing like it in all the Town."

Dumbly the mother fingered the stuff; she felt of it tenderly, reverently, and after a long time she said, "But you couldn't wear such clothes here. Nobody has ever seen anything like them . . . except on Lily, and she's different. That's why people talk about her. No, you couldn't wear them here. People would laugh at you."

For an answer Ellen only held up the green gown and then the black one. They were simply made and not dissimilar, the flame colored one girdled by a chain of glittering rhinestones, the others by cords of silver. They were so scant there seemed to be nothing to them, so simply made that their lack of ornament conveyed to Hattie Tolliver a sense of nakedness. People in the Town wore bows, rosebuds, festoons of lace—all save Lily.

"I don't see what Lily was thinking of," she observed presently. And she drew in her lower lip doubtfully with an air of meditation as if the gowns raised before her eyes a wild vista of foreign orgies.

"Yes, people *would* laugh at me," said Ellen, "not that it makes any difference."

And placing the gowns over her arm, she turned away and started up the stairs to her own room. Her mother, staring after her, made a clucking sound which was her invariable signal of alarm. She must have speculated upon what passed between Ellen and her mysterious cousin within the depths of the gloomy house among the Mills; but she said nothing. In such a mood, it was impossible to learn anything from the girl.

And as she turned at last to resume her duties in the kitchen, the shadow of a motheaten coonskin coat and beaver hat passed the window. It was the ominous shadow of Gramp Tolliver hungrily returning for his noon meal. Clearly there was calamity in the air. He had never been so active before. . . .

Ellen had a way of dealing with the truth which must have alarmed her mother. It was not that she lied; rather it was that by some selective process she withheld certain truths and brought forward others so that the resulting effect was one of distortion, complicated by the wildest variation of mood. At the moment the girl appeared to be elated, perhaps only by the possession of the three naked gowns—so elated that her high spirits carried into the afternoon when she announced her intention of going skating.

"Are you going with May?" questioned her mother as she left the house.

"No, I'm going alone. May has Clarence Murdock. I don't imagine she'll want to be disturbed." And then with a sort of grim malice she added, "Things aren't moving very fast for May. . . . Not fast enough to suit her mother. You see she spread the story months ago that she was already engaged, and now she has to make it work out."

And without another word she passed out of the door into the bright cold sunshine, her tall, fine figure moving briskly down the

path between the shaggy, frozen lilacs that marked the path to that extraordinary house of the shabby and respectable Tollivers.

17

WALKER'S Pond lay on the outskirts of the Town, a long sinuous expanse of water, frozen now, which wound its length between two long low hills left behind by the melting of the second great glacier. It twisted its way among the convolutions of rock and earth in a multitude of small coves and inlets, fringed by tangled bushes and low willows that stood black and naked in the winter wind. At the lower end the pond expanded into a broad and circular lake on the borders of which stood a low shed. Here it was that the crowds from the Town did their skating and here it was that May, in ignorance of the promise exacted by her impatient father, had brought the reluctant Clarence.

Any one watching the course of Ellen as she neared the spot must have realized that she had no intention of joining the crowd; instead of approaching the pond by the road of frozen clay which ended near the shed, she turned off through the fields, and swinging her skates, struck out for the far end where it lengthened into a serpentine canal. As she walked her skirts struck the ice coated stalks of the dead weeds, causing them to break off and fall beneath her feet with a slight tinkling sound of distant, crystal music. Among the bushes that bordered the fields the berries of the dogwood showed crimson against the black of the bare branches with a color rivaled only by the dark flame of the plumed sumach. Something in the day's brilliance must have penetrated the soul of the girl, for she sang as she walked more and more quickly in the direction of the ice. There was in her manner, now that she was once more alone and unharassed, something wild and passionate, a sort of untamed fierceness of the spirit.

Before her from the crest of the low hill, the lower pond at last spread out its glittering oval, sprinkled now with the black figures of skaters moving round and round with a soft rhythmic motion. The crisp air rang with the distant sound of steel upon ice. It was a queer, muted sound, like the music of violins in a far-off orchestra. For a moment Ellen stood quietly among the trees contemplating the distant black figures, as if she stood, a goddess, upon some Olympian peak regarding the spectacle of Man; and then with a sudden bound, she ran down the long slope and in a little cove sheltered from the wind, fastened her skates, and sprang forward on to the glistening ice.

She skated superbly. The lines of her young body, so slender, so sinuous, so strong, despite all the awkwardness of her clothes, stood revealed in the triumphant swing of her strokes. Here in her own hidden cove, she gave full rein to the wild, secret ecstasy of a proud, shy soul. Now she flew ahead into the biting wind; now she halted, pirouetting in a wild freedom; now, with a careless grace, she skated backward for a time, and presently she fell to practising with the precision of an artist one intricate figure after another. In this lonely backwater, she must have skated thus, triumphing in her skill and grace, for more than an hour; and at length, when she had accomplished each figure with perfection, she glided to the bank and, removing her skates, set about gathering sticks. In another moment she had lighted a fire and sat down by the side of it, her hair streaming, her cheeks bright with the cold, to warm her hands and sit staring into the blaze. Drifting up the sinuous curves of the pond, the sound of skating still floated toward her, but of this she no longer appeared to take any notice. She sat thoughtfully, ignoring it, and presently the color began a little to recede from her cheek and the old expression of restlessness to steal back into her dark eyes. The hills shut her in now, as if they might imprison her in their brooding fashion forever.

She had been sitting thus for more than an hour, apparently in profound thought, when slowly she became aware that the soli-

tude of her retreat had been violated. In the gathering dusk of the early winter evening she beheld, through the branches of the thick willows which sheltered her, the figure of an intruder—a man—who skated awkwardly and with an air of effort, as if the act required the most profound concentration. Yet it was clear that his mind wandered now and then to other things, for from time to time in the stillness of the evening the sound of his muttering reached her. He failed even to notice the smoke of the dying fire, and as he came nearer a sudden gust of wind carried his words toward her so that in snatches they became audible.

"I won't do it. . . . I'll be damned if I do. (And then the labored, steady ring of his skates on the glittering ice.) They can't make me. . . ." (Then once more a painful labored concentration upon skates and ankles that were too weak.)

By now Ellen must have recognized him. The figure was unmistakable—slight, rather stiff and incredibly neat, even to the carefully pressed line of his trousers. In place of a warm skating cap he wore a Fedora hat pulled over his ears to prevent the wind, which had reddened his smooth face, from blowing it astray. The man was Clarence Murdock. Ellen might have permitted him to pass unnoticed, save that in the next moment he came round the willows and, tottering upon his skates, stood face to face with her.

For a moment he stared at her silently, with the air of one who cannot believe his senses.

"Well?" said Ellen, rising to her feet slowly.

Clarence shook himself, balancing more and more perilously on his skates. "I didn't know you were here," he began. "I didn't see you."

"I wasn't *there*," replied Ellen, indicating the direction of the round pond. "I've been skating here all afternoon. . . . You look cold. Wait, I'll poke up the fire. I was going home, but I'm in no hurry."

Once his astonishment had passed away, his manner assumed a

certain calm; it appeared even that he experienced a relief in finding her there among the willows. He began to rub his ears vigorously while the fire, beneath the proddings of Ellen and the addition of more fuel, sprang into a blaze. It crackled cheerily and sent a bright shower of sparks heavenward. Within its glow Clarence, extending his hands toward the warmth, seated himself. He was more calm now, as if the quiet, capable directness of the girl had quieted his anxiety.

There was a long silence and presently Ellen asked, "Where's May?" But all the answer she received was a nod of the head indicating the round pond that lay beyond the hill. Again the silence enveloped them.

"It's fine skating," said Ellen, in another attempt at conversation. "The best there has been this winter." (It was clear that she could not say she had heard him talking to himself.)

"It is," replied her companion, thoughtfully, "but I can't skate very well. It's been a long time. . . ."

The girl was slipping on her skates once more with an air which said, "If you won't talk then I'll skate, at least until you warm yourself." She slipped to the edge of the ice and glided away, but she did not go any great distance. She circled about, gracefully, with a sure strength which carried an air of defiance, as if she sought to show Mr. Murdock how well it could be done. She pirouetted and did difficult figures with all the grace of a soaring bird. Indeed, she should have been to Clarence Murdock an intolerable spectacle. But she was not insufferable; on the contrary she clearly inspired him with a profound wonder. He watched her with a concentration approached only by that which he had given to his own efforts in the same direction. To observe her more clearly, he had put on his nose glasses and, beneath their neatly polished surface, his near-sighted eyes grew bright with admiration. Presently as she approached the shore in a sadder graceful swoop, he stirred himself and said, "You skate beautifully. . . . I wonder if you could help me."

"To skate?" inquired Ellen.

Clarence coughed nervously. "I don't mean that," he said. "I mean in another way."

Ellen, halting abruptly, seated herself on a rock. "In what way?" she asked. "I'll help you if I can."

For a time Clarence did not reply. In the distance, the faint whirring sound of the other skaters had grown gradually less and less distinct as one by one they withdrew from the ice to turn their feet homeward toward the Town. At last he said, "I oughtn't to speak to you, but I thought you might understand . . . being a woman."

It was the first time any one had ever called her a woman, and, despite all her hard independence, it flattered her. She leaned forward a little and said, "Maybe I will . . . I don't know until you tell me what it is."

And then Clarence blurted out the truth. "It's about May. . . . I don't want to marry her!"

Ellen laughed suddenly in a mocking fashion. "Well," she said, "do you have to? Have you asked her to? There's no law to make you do it."

At this speech Clarence blushed, and to cover his embarrassment, he bent his head and started once more to rub his ears, so that when he spoke again it was without looking at her. "It isn't that . . . I haven't asked her. But I'm in a bad position. You see, I promised her father that I'd ask her to-day. . . . I didn't want to. I really didn't. I had meant to once, but I changed my mind. . . . I can't explain that. It was her father that forced the promise out of me."

There was no doubt of his misery. Even to Ellen it must have been clear that he felt cornered, trapped, like some mild and in-offensive animal. He was such a nice young man.

Again Ellen laughed scornfully. "It's what old man Seton would do . . . the old skinflint!"

In the darkness beyond the little ring of flame the shadows

danced on the black and naked bushes. There was in the lonely figures by the fire an air of infinite pathos. They were both so young, so ignorant, so perplexed by the business of living.

"You can always run away," suggested Ellen. "They couldn't arrest you for it. . . ."

At this Clarence looked up suddenly. "But don't you see, all my clothes are at the Setons'. . . everything I brought with me. I have to get them and if I go back I'll have to face her father."

"But is that the only reason?" asked his companion. "I should think you'd be glad enough to escape at the price of a few clothes." She laughed suddenly with a curious, scornful mockery that confused Clarence. "That is, if you really want to escape. I should think you wouldn't want to settle down in this nasty Town. . . . There's nothing here for you. There's nothing for any one. I'm going to run away before long myself," she added boldly.

She spoke with such passion that Clarence made no reply for a long time. He sat watching her across the circle of light, contemplating her clear blue eyes, the fine glow of her face, the superb line of the throat which she herself admired so passionately. Something was happening to him; it was the old thing once more at work, the thing which betrayed him when he least expected it. Presently he said, "You're still going to New York? To study?"

To which Ellen replied with the same intensity, "Of course I am. I don't want a little shut-in world. They can't smother me . . . none of them! Not all of them together!"

It may have been that Clarence gathered strength from her strength, that far down in his timid soul some chord of his nature responded to the defiance of the girl. Certainly she was admirable . . . the way she had come to this hidden spot to skate in solitude, to build a fire with her own hands, to ask him in a friendly way, so frank and so free from all coyness and giggling, to warm his anemic frozen body. She *was* like the woman on the train. She wasn't afraid. And she didn't giggle. . . .

"I've been wondering," he said after a little time. "I've been wondering . . ." and then he coughed suddenly. "Would you come with me to New York?"

At this speech Ellen looked at him with a sudden penetrating glance, as if she failed to understand his meaning. Then, with the caution of a proud nature, she said, "But you see, I haven't enough money yet. It takes money for a girl alone in a city." She did not expose herself to the peril of being hurt.

But Clarence, now that he was started, rushed on, "I don't mean that . . . I mean . . . would you marry me? Would you come as my wife?"

The sound of the distant skating had died away until by now only the faintest ring of steel singing upon the ice was borne by the rising wind into the little cove. In the darkness Ellen bowed her head and sat thus silently for a long time. Her thoughts, whatever they may have been, were interrupted presently by the sound of Clarence's voice, softer this time, and less frightened, though it still carried a timidity, almost the abjectness of an apology.

"I could help you. . . . I could make money and you could go on with your music. You see, this didn't come over me suddenly. I've thought about it before . . . ever since I saw you that first time."

There was nothing in the least dominating in his manner. He sat there at a proper distance from her, mild and gentle, pleading his case. It was clear that he was even a little frightened, as if he had spoken almost without willing it. But the little vein in his throat which Lily had noticed so long before began to throb, slowly at first and then with steadily mounting rapidity. If Lily had been there, she would have understood its significance as surely as a ship's captain watching his barometer in a storm. Lily understood such things.

When at last Ellen raised her head, it was to look at him directly and with a certain appraising frankness.

"Yes. . . . I'll marry you," she said at last. She spoke breathlessly, her voice clouded by a faint choking sound as if for the first time in her life she were really frightened.

"I'm glad," said Clarence. "You see, I want to be great and famous some day. I want to be rich, and I want some one to share it with me. I couldn't marry May. It would be like shutting myself up in a trap." The terrible ambitions were loose again, running wild, leaping all bounds, intoxicating him. "I want to be great and rich . . . if I can. I never told anybody this before, but I thought you might understand because you're different."

It was the longest speech he had ever made in her presence, and throughout its duration Ellen watched him with a growing wonder mirrored in her eyes.

"I didn't know you felt that way," she said almost with reverence. "You never mentioned it before. I thought you'd be content with May."

But all the same, her words lacked the ring of conviction. All at once she felt herself engulfed by a great and unaccustomed wave of pity that was quite beyond explanation. She felt that Mr. Murdock was pathetic. It was almost as if she could weep for him. It was not until long afterward that she understood this chaotic emotion. It passed quickly, and she said, "But you'd better go now and find May. . . . Don't wait for me . . . I'm all right. . . . She must be all alone by now, wondering where you are. I can look out for myself."

And a little later Clarence, treacherously shepherding May on their last walk together, saw in the far distance against the dying glow the black silhouette of Ellen. Alone she moved over the crest of the high hill, walking slowly now, her head bent in thought . . . remote, proud and somehow terrifying.

IT was not until ten o'clock that Mrs. Tolliver began to grow uneasy. There had been, after all, nothing to cause alarm. An hour before supper Ellen had come in from skating with a countenance fresh and almost happy. True, Gramp Tolliver had returned late from one of his expeditions—the second that day—and was noisier and more impatient than usual in his room above stairs. Indeed his uproar continued even after feeding time, until long after Ellen, saying that she was to spend the evening at the Setons', had gone out into the rising wind. If there was anything which alarmed Mrs. Tolliver it was the mutterings of the volcano overhead; so great was the variety of its manifestations that she remarked upon it to her husband.

"You know," she said, "Gramp is restless again . . . worse than ever . . . worse than he was at election time."

From his refuge on the great threadbare sofa her husband mumbled a reply, indistinct yet understandable because it was a speech he made so frequently when his wife insisted upon conversation.

"You're worrying again. . . . There's nothing to worry about."

But she knew that she was right. It was a feeling which was almost physical, an intuition, an instinct which her husband, in the way of fathers (which at best were but poor things), did not share. After all he came by his conclusions in a logical fashion, not without the aid of a peculiar and individual philosophy, and therefore, by omitting the human equation, he gave his wife the opportunity more than once of saying, "I told you so."

Though Mrs. Tolliver rocked and darned placidly enough, she was not, even out of respect for her husband's love of slumber and forgetfulness, to be kept silent. When Ellen was out and there was no flow of music to bind together the comfort of the evening, it was necessary to talk; otherwise the peace became mere stillness, and the contentment a barren boredom. For Mrs. Tolliver

needed constant evidence of happiness or cordiality. It was a thing not to be taken easily and for granted; one must make a show of it.

"He behaved like this, only not as bad, when Judge Weissman—the dirty scoundrel—bought the last election."

This time the only reply from the sofa was an engulfing silence, broken now and then by the aggravating sound of heavy breathing.

"Why don't you say something?" she said at last in exasperation. "Why don't you talk to me? I work all day and then when evening comes, all you do is to sleep."

The blanket on the sofa heaved a little and Charles Tolliver changed his position, muttering at the same time, "What shall I say? What do you want me to say?" And then after a pregnant silence, "If Gramp is ranting around, I don't see what we can do about it."

He spoke thus of his father in the most natural fashion. It was as if the old man were something of a stranger to him, a vague figure entirely outside the circle of the family existence.

After another long silence, Mrs. Tolliver observed, "It's nearly eleven o'clock and Ellen hasn't come in yet." Then she leaned forward to address her sons who lay sprawled on the floor, the older one reading as usual, the other lying on his back staring in his sulky way at the ceiling. "You boys must go to bed now. I'll come up with you and see that you're tucked in properly. It's a cold night."

The three departed and after a time, during which the hall clock sounded the hour of eleven, she descended from the neat upper regions and went into the kitchen to see that the door was locked, that the dog was on his mat, that the tap was not dripping, indeed, to oversee all the minutiae of the household that were the very breath of her existence. When at last she reëntered the living room there was in her manner every evidence of agitation. She approached her husband and shook him from his comfortable oblivion.

"I don't understand about Ellen," she said. "It's very late.

Maybe you'd better go over to the Setons' and see what has happened to her."

But her spouse only groaned and muttered. "Wait a while. . . . Like as not she's in bed asleep."

"That couldn't be . . . not without my knowing it."

What she would have done next was a matter for speculation, but before she had opportunity to act there rang through the silent house the sound of the doorbell being pushed violently and with annoying energy. It rang in a series of staccato periods, broken now and then with a single long and violent clamor. At the sound Mrs. Tolliver ran, and, as she approached the door, she cried out, "Yes! . . . Yes! . . . I'm coming. You needn't wear out the battery!"

On opening it she discovered on the outside that source of all evil, Jimmy Seton. Even at sight of her he was unable to relinquish the pleasure of ringing the bell. Indeed he kept his hand upon the button until she knocked it loose by a sudden slap on the wrist.

"What do you mean by ringing like that?"

Jimmy, unabashed, faced her. "Ma," he began, in his shrill voice, "wants to know if Mr. Murdock is over here. He ain't been at our house since before supper. He said he was going to the barber shop and he never came back."

For an instant, Mrs. Tolliver, wisely, held her tongue. The old instinct, working rapidly, told her that she must protect Ellen. It was clear then that the girl had not gone to the Setons'. Where could she be? Where was Mr. Murdock? Within the space of a second unspeakable catastrophes framed themselves in her mind. But she managed to answer. "He's not here. He hasn't been here. I don't know anything about him."

"All right," said Jimmy. "I'll tell her."

He made a faint gesture toward the button of the doorbell but Mrs. Tolliver thrust her powerful body between him and the object of his temptation, so that Jimmy, with a baffled air, turned

and sped away into the darkness. When he had vanished she closed the door slowly, and stood for an instant leaning against it. Then, before she moved away, she raised her voice in a summons.

"Papa!" she called "Papa! Something *has* happened. Ellen wasn't at the Setons' and Mr. Murdock is missing."

In the moment or two while she stood thus with her hand resting on the knob of the door, there passed quickly through her mind in a series of isolated fragments all the events and the forebodings of the past few weeks. Gradually these fitted into a pattern. She understood well enough what had happened; she knew that Ellen had gone. Yet she refused to admit this, as if by refusing to acknowledge the fact it might come gradually to have no existence. She understood Gramp Tolliver's ominous outburst of restlessness, Ellen's strange look of triumph, the air almost of happiness which had come over the girl. Only one thing she could not understand. . . . Clarence Murdock! After all, Ellen had mocked him as something quite beneath her consideration. Why had she chosen him?

In that single brief moment she was hurt more deeply than she was ever hurt again. Those things which came afterward were not so cruel because she came in time to be used to them. But this . . . this was so sudden, so cruel. She had no defenses ready, not even the defense which the less primitive have—a capacity for putting themselves into the shoes of the other fellow, of understanding why he should have acted thus and so. No, there was nothing, save only a sudden sharp physical pain and that which was far greater—a fear for a child who was gone suddenly from her protection.

When she reëntered the warm living room, she found her husband sitting on the edge of his sofa. Because he was a man who

enjoyed his sleep and was reluctant to shake it off, he was not altogether awake.

"You say," he murmured drowsily, "that Ellen has run off with that Murdock?"

"They are both gone. . . . They must have gone together."

This the husband considered for a moment. Foolishly exalting logic above intuition, he asked, "How do you know?" To which his wife retorted, "Know! Know! Because I do know! I'm sure of it. . . . What are we going to do?" Suddenly she leaned forward and shook him violently. "Why, they're not even married. They can't have been and they've gone off together. . Anything might happen."

The husband, out of the depths of knowledge which arose not from instinct or profound love but from long speculation upon the human race answered, "Don't worry about that. Ellen's no fool! She's not in love with him!"

"When you talk like that, you're like your father!" Nothing could have signified in clearer fashion the gravity of the situation, for this was a retort which Mrs. Tolliver used only upon occasions of profound disaster. It was, she believed, the most cruel thing she could say. This time she did not wait for him to reply.

"What train have they taken? . . . They're bound to go east. Perhaps you can stop them. Come! Get up. . . . If you don't go I will!"

With exasperating slowness her husband gained his feet. "There's a train a little after eleven." He regarded his watch. "We might be able to catch them, though I don't think I can make it."

Already his wife stood before him with the coat she had taken from the living room closet. "Here!" she said. "And wrap your throat well. It's a bitter night." Then she herself helped him into his coat and fastened his muffler with great care. Before she had finished, he asked, "What sort of a person is this Murdock?"

"It's no time to ask that. . . . Go! Hurry!"

Barely had these speeding words fallen from her lips when from overhead there came with the suddenness of an explosion the sound of a terrific crash, as if some part of the house had suddenly collapsed. The sound distinctly came from the rear. The volcano at last had burst forth!

In a breathless instant, the pair faced each other. It was Mrs. Tolliver who spoke first.

"What has he done now?" And with a fierce emphasis she added, "I think the Devil himself has gotten into him." Then she recovered herself quickly. "Go! Go! Catch Ellen. I'll take care of Gramp."

He argued for a moment—one precious moment—and losing as usual, was sped on his way by his powerful wife.

When her husband had vanished sleepily into the darkness, Mrs. Tolliver made her way up the back stairs to the room under the tin roof. As she opened the door, there rose before her in the flickering light of the kerosene lamp a room which had the appearance of a place wrecked by a cyclone. One of the vast bookcases lay overturned, the worn leather volumes sprawled in a wild confusion about the floor. Bits of paper covered with bird track handwriting lay scattered like fallen leaves and at one side, a little removed from the path of the catastrophe, lay stretched at full length the brittle body of Gramp Tolliver, still and apparently unconscious. There was in its rigidity something ghastly. Only a miracle had saved him from being buried under his own books, battered and broken perhaps by his own beloved *Decline and Fall*.

Climbing over the wreckage, Mrs. Tolliver leaned down and took the body of the old man in her arms. Thus a truce was declared, and when the one enemy had made certain that the other was still alive, she went downstairs, wrapped a shawl about her and fetched a doctor.

IT was midnight when Charles Tolliver returned alone. Without removing his coat or the carefully bound muffler, he made his way through the house to the back stairs which he climbed slowly and with an air of sheepishness. His wife was, after all, no easy woman to face under conditions like this. The news he had for her was not the best. Indeed it is probable that he experienced a great relief when he found that his wife was not alone. In the dusty room thrown now into a wild disorder which Mrs. Tolliver was already vigorously engaged in clearing away, the doctor stood beside the bed. There was a quality of the grotesque in the battered figure of the old man and the fantastic shadow of the physician cast by the flickering light upon the wall. At the sound of his footsteps Mrs. Tolliver, still holding in her arms volumes three and four of the *Decline and Fall*, looked up from her task. She stared hard at him as if by concentration she might produce out of thin air the figure of her daughter. But there was no mistake. He was alone.

It was Charles Tolliver who spoke first. He found no pleasure in airing his troubles in public, so he said nothing of his errand. "What's the matter with Gramp?"

The doctor faced him. He was a short fat man with little mutton chop whiskers. "It seems he's had a stroke," he murmured. "And yet I don't know. It might be something else. The symptoms aren't right." And he took up once more the bony wrist, to count the pulse. Instantly Mrs. Tolliver stepped close to her husband.

"Did you find her?" she asked in a low voice.

"No. . . . The train was pulling out just as I reached the station. I was a minute too late."

"It was Gramp who let her get away. If you hadn't stayed to argue. You could have hurried. My God, who knows what will happen to her. . . . My little girl!"

"She isn't that. . . . Not any longer."

But before she could reply the doctor interrupted. "No, I don't know what it is. His pulse seems all right and he has no fever." And the little man fell to wagging his head, in the manner of a physician who was always secretly doubtful of his own opinion. "To-morrow I'll fetch another doctor. We'll have to have a consultation."

After that he packed his bag, wrapped himself up to the throat and bidding them good night in a mournful, bedside whisper, as if (thought Hattie sourly) Gramp had been an adored child cut off in the bloom of youth, made his way down the creaking stairs.

When he had gone, Mrs. Tolliver turned abruptly and said again, "You could have made it if Gramp hadn't thrown this fit. And now she's gone. . . ."

In the shadows that covered the vast bed, Gramp Tolliver's body lay stiff as a poker thrust beneath the sheets. But presently in the midst of the hushed talk that went on by his side, one eye opened slowly and surveyed the scene. For an instant there rose in the still cold air the echo—it could not have been more than that—of a far-off demoniacal chuckle. At the sound Mrs. Tolliver turned and approached the bed.

"He laughed," she said to her husband. "I'm sure of it . . ." and she shook the old man gently without gaining the faintest suspicion of a response. He lay rigid and still. At last she turned away.

"Go," she said, "and take the next train. You might catch them at Pittsburgh. If you haven't enough money there's some tied in a handkerchief under the mattress."

"But you. . . . What'll you do?"

"Never mind me . . . I'll sit here in the rocker and keep watch. . . ."

And until the gray winter dawn crept in at the windows she sat there, awake, with one eye on the old man, for the echo of that wicked chuckle had awakened in her mind the most amazing suspicions. In the single moment that she had stood listening to the sound of the catastrophe overhead, Ellen had made her escape.

. . . How could he have known what no one else knew? Yet she was certain that he had known.

Charles Tolliver did not overtake his daughter; indeed, on that night she escaped from him forever. He saw her afterward . . . long afterward, but he never recaptured her, even for one fleeting moment. Perhaps in the dismal solitude of a day coach filled with weary travelers rushing eastward through the winter night, he understood this in his own way. It was, after all, a way different from that of his father, Old Gramp, or his wife who sat patiently now in a kind of dumb, animal agony by the side of the old man. Of Charles Tolliver, it might have been said that he expected nothing of life, that from the very first he had accepted life as at best a matter of compromise. One took what came and was thankful that it was not worse. Because he was like this people called him a weak man.

And it is impossible to say that he regretted profoundly the flight of his daughter. In his gentleness, he understood that this thing which she had done was inevitable. Nothing could have prevented it. Even the pursuit was a futile thing. If Ellen were recaptured, it was vain to hope that she would remain so; yet the pursuit was in itself a symbol of action and therefore it satisfied his wife in at least a small way. It may even have been that in the rare wakeful moments of his lonely, fruitless journey he envied Ellen; that he saw in her escape a hope which had always eluded him. He had been known since childhood as a worthy man, the unfortunate son of a father who was worthless and a failure. He had existed always as a symbol of virtue, as one who had stood by his mother (dead now these many years) in the long periods of poverty and unhappiness. If he had been ruthless instead of dutiful, if he had escaped, if he had ventured into a new world . . . What might have happened? But even this thought could not have troubled him for long. He slipped easily back into the pleasant oblivion of sleep.

The passengers wakeful, uncomfortable, restless in the close air of the crowded car could never have guessed that the gray-haired, handsome man, who slept so peacefully, was a father in pursuit of an eloping daughter.

And in another train a hundred miles beyond, rushing faster and faster toward the rising dawn, sat Ellen and Clarence Murdock. They too rode in the common car, for the train was crowded. They sat bolt upright and rather far apart for lovers. From time to time Clarence reached out and touched her hand, gently, almost with deprecation, and to this she submitted quietly, as if she were unconscious of the humble gesture toward affection. It is true that they were both a little frightened; what had happened had happened so quickly. Even Clarence could not have explained it. To Ellen, though she came in the end to understand it all, it must have been a great mystery.

The romance--what little of it there had been--was all vanished now, gone cold before the glare of the flaring lights, beneath the staring, bleary eyes of their fellow passengers. Somehow everything had turned cold and stuffy, touched by the taste of soot and the accumulated dust of half a continent. The train rocked and swayed over the glittering rails, and presently Clarence, who had been frowning for a long time over something, said, "D'you think they'll ever send on my hand bags?"

Ellen laughed and regarded him suddenly with a curious glance of startled affection. For a moment one might have taken them for a mother and child . . . a mother who saw that her child must be protected and pitied a little.

"I wouldn't worry over that," she answered. "What difference does it make now?"

"And May . . ." began Clarence once more.

"It's done now," said Ellen gravely. "Besides in a little while she'll forget everything and marry some one else. Any man will suit May. It's only *a* man she wants, not *the* man."

But Clarence was not comforted; there was his conscience to

torment him, and worse than that there was a distrust, vague and undefined, of what lay ahead. He could not have described it. If he had been a strong man, he would have said, "All this is a mistake. We will not marry. It is wrong, everything about it." He could have turned back then and saved himself; but he did not. He sat quietly against the dusty plush, watching Ellen now and then out of the corner of his nice eyes with the manner of a man resting upon the rim of a volcano.

By dawn the train had come in sight of the furnaces on the outskirts of Pittsburgh and the color of the flames mingled with the cold gray of the January sky. He had come out on the train with Lily; he was going back on the train with her cousin. He stood there, timidly, upon the threshold of his new world—a world filled with people who haunted those rare flights of a treacherous imagination.

20

IT was not until noon of the following day that the amazing news percolated fully through the houses of the Town. Women congregated and discussed it, passionately; men greeted each other with the news, "Have you heard that Charlie Tolliver's girl has eloped with that young Murdock who was visiting Skinflint Seton?" They turned the news over and over, worrying it, adding details, filling in the gaps in a story which could have been known to no one. And always the conclusion was the same . . . that here was another evidence of the wildness and eccentricity of the Barr family. Old Julia Shane, in her youth, had done the same thing. And then there was Sam Barr and his crazy perpetual motion machine. The history of this spirited family was ransacked and a thousand odd, half-forgotten stories brought to light. There was, of course, that element which hinted that Ellen had eloped because the circum-

stances made it necessary. Women said this, not because they believed it, but because they hated Ellen and old Julia Shane.

In her sooty house among the Mills this grim old woman received the news, rather later than most (it was brought her by one of her negro servants) with a sort of wicked delight. This was a great-niece worthy of her blood, who took matters into her own hands and acted, quickly, sensationally! And before an hour had passed she seated herself with a quill pen and wrote the news triumphantly to Lily who, that morning, had started back to Paris. The letter finally overtook her daughter a month later when Lily, installed once more in her big house in the Rue Raynouard, sat awaiting the arrival of her friend the Baron. To him she read it aloud, creating for his pleasure a picture of the smoky Town, of the effect the news would have upon its residents. She described to him the fierce impetuous Ellen. She told him the Town was a town like Roubaix or Tourcoing or Lille, only more provincial.

Across the silver-laden tea table in her long drawing-room in Passy, she said, "You may see her one day yourself. I've told her to come here and live with me. She wants to be a great pianist. . . . A girl like that can accomplish anything she sets her mind to. . . . But I don't think you'll like her. . . . She's too powerful."

Nearer home, the news came to May Seton and her mother a little after midnight when Jimmy, sent a second time as messenger, brought back the suspicion of their elopement. In the beginning the situation was embarrassing, for May in her optimism had spread the story that the *fiançailles* of Clarence and herself had been accomplished. Once this had passed, she experienced a sort of inverted triumph, superior if possible even to that which might have arisen from the capture of a New York young man. She understood presently that people regarded her as a martyr, a virgin robbed of her lover, and once she got the full sense of this she played the rôle to perfection. Dressed in her most somber clothing, as if she mourned a lover worse than dead, she paid

and received a great number of calls, always in company with her mother who now assumed the rôle of duenna and garnished May's account of the affair with appropriate and growing details. Old ladies swooped about and settled upon the tale to pick it over and contemplate the ruins with ghoulish satisfaction, until at length the event, now of proportions beyond the realms of the imagination, became an epic in the chronicles of the Town, a piece in which May Seton played the rôle of injured innocence and Ellen that of adventuress in the grand manner of East Lynne or Lady Audley's Secret. In short, what had appeared in the beginning to be a calamity, turned out to be a triumph. Husbands might be found at every turn, but public martyrdom comes rarely. Indeed before many weeks had passed, potential husbands began to loom upon the horizon and crowd into the middle distance. Because May in her bereavement had become what she had never been . . . a figure of interest.

But there was one part of the story which remained known to only one person in the Town. It was the space of time which elapsed between the hour that Clarence departed for the mythical barber shop and the hour the train left for the east. This was a matter of five hours, in which much might have taken place. No one seemed able to account for it. No one had seen either of them. They had, to all intents, disappeared for five hours . . . a thing which in the Town was incredible.

Yet there was one person who knew, and she was the last whom any one could suspect. It was impossible to believe that a creature so birdlike, so gentle, could have played a part in so scandalous an affair as the rape of May Seton's lover. Yet it was true; the guilty pair had spent the five hours in the room filled with conch shells and pampas grass and plush, for Miss Ogilvie had kept her rash promise to Ellen. Indeed, the whole affair had been planned under her very eyes. But in the little house surrounded by lilacs and syringa bushes, she kept her secret as faithfully as she had kept her promise, though it was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to her. It was almost as if she herself had escaped

into a great world where there were no neighbors and no sewing circles.

But the two who suffered most were the two whose pride was greatest . . . those born enemies Mrs. Tolliver and Skinflint Seton. From the moment of the elopement the ancient feud over the swindle of the synthetic corset stays emerged without shame or pretense into the open, and the story became common property that Harvey Seton had been seen on the Tollivers' piazza being ordered into the street because he suggested that Ellen had eloped because the circumstances made it necessary.

Scarcely less mysterious than the missing five hours was the nature of Gramp's illness, a thing which had baffled the consultations and head waggings of the Town's best medical talent. Two days later he was up and about again perambulating once more, in his coonskin coat, the icy pavement of the Town. And it was with a new look of defiant malice that he regarded the faces peering at him from behind the Boston ferns of Sycamore Street. The sharp old eyes mocked the passers-by. They said, "My Granddaughter has a good deal of the old man in her. She has the courage to do as she sees fit. You'll hear from that girl!" All this punctuated by the sharp tap! tap! tap! of his tough hickory stick on icy pavements where an ordinary man would long ago have slipped and broken his leg.

21

WEEEKS passed before there came from Ellen any news beyond the mere statement that she was alive, comfortable and well, and that although she was sorry for her actions she could not have done otherwise. Some day, she implied with romantic overtones, they would understand.

When at last a real letter came, it was turbulent, hard and unrepentant. Nor was the spelling the best.

"I am sorry for May . . . a little," she wrote, "but it won't make any difference to her. She is in love with men and not one man. To have lost Clarence won't end her happiness. Any man will do as well. In a year she'll be married, like as not to Herman Biggs. It was different with me. Everything depended upon Clarence . . . everything, you understand. To me he made all the difference.

"And we are happy," she continued, as if this was, after all, a matter of secondary importance. "Clarence loves me. We have a nice apartment quite near to Riverside Drive that overlooks the river where the warships anchor. It is the top floor of an enormous apartment house . . . ten stories high, and the view is wonderful. You can see over half the city. It is called the Babylon Arms.

"You see, Clarence and two friends of his (a Mr. Bunce and a Mr. Wyck) shared it before I came and now we have it to ourselves, because his two friends kindly moved elsewhere. Mr. Bunce is nice but Mr. Wyck is a poor sport, always talking about his relatives. You see, he's what he calls an 'old New Yorker,' sort of run-down and pathetic, and awfully dependent. I think he hates me for having taken Clarence away from him, and for breaking up the apartment. But it doesn't matter. He's too insignificant to count.

"Mr. Bunce got married the other day. He says we drove him to it, chasing him out into the street with no place to live. That's the way he talks . . . hearty and pleasant but a bit noisy. The girl isn't much—a big, pleasant girl like himself whose father is a building contractor in Hoboken, which is really a suburb of New York."

And so she sketched briefly, and with the careless cynicism of youth, the downfall of Mr. Wyck; for it is true that the reverberations of the elopement made themselves felt in a place so far from the Town as the Magical City. With her appearance the whole world of Mr. Wyck toppled, hung for a moment in mid-air, and at last collapsed, leaving him in the backwater of a grimy

boarding house on lower Lexington Avenue. No longer had he any one to admire or honor him for the sake of the ancient Wyck blood and the spinster aunts in Yonkers. On the very day of Ellen's arrival the name of Wyck Street was changed to Sullivan in honor of a Tammany politician. Night after night, a lonely little man, he sat, an outcast, on the edge of his narrow bed, waiting for his milk to heat over the gas jet in the fourth floor rear. He mourned Clarence who represented the only friendship he had ever known. He mourned the Babylon Arms where for a time he had been almost a man, independent and free. And as he mourned the hatred grew in the recesses of his timid, unhappy soul.

It is true that in her letter Ellen revealed a great deal, but it is true that she did not reveal everything, for there remained between her and a complete revelation the pride which would not allow her to admit disillusion. She did not, for example, say that the view from her windows included, besides the noble river, glimpses of wooden shacks and bleak factories, half-veiled in smoke and mist, on the distant Jersey shore. Nor did she say that beneath her window there were monotonous and hideous rows of brownstone houses, unrelieved in their ugliness even by tiny patches of mangy grass. And she said nothing of the railway tracks that lay between her and the river, crowded with cars that imprisoned lines of wretched cattle standing shoulder to shoulder, whose presence sometimes filled the lofty flat with the faint, dismal sounds and odors of the barnyard. These things she could not bring herself to set down on paper because they would have dimmed the splendor raised by such a name as The Babylon Arms.

Nor did she say that after all Mr. Bunce and Mr. Wyck and even perhaps Clarence were not so different from the people in the Town; because this might have given rise to a faint suspicion that, after all, she had not escaped. There were things and shades of things which the Town must never know. She under-

stood, perhaps even then, the affair of building a career. There must be glory, only glory, and triumph.

And Mrs. Tolliver, reading the letter over and over in the long darkness of the winter evenings, stirred herself night after night to observe that "something had happened to Ellen."

"She's told me more in this letter than she has ever told me in all her life before. She must be happy or she couldn't write such a letter."

And for a time she consoled herself with this thought, only to utter after a long silence the eternal doubt. "I only hope he's good enough for her."

Then, when her husband had fallen into a final deep slumber from which he stubbornly refused to be roused, it was the habit of the woman to go to the piano and dissipate the terrible stillness of the lonely room with the strains of *The Blue Danube* and *The Ninety and Nine* played laboriously with fingers that were stained and a little stiff from hard work.

The faint, awkward sounds, arising so uncertainly from the depths of a piano accustomed now to silence, must have roused in her a long sequence of memories turning backward slowly as she played, into the days when she had struggled for time from household cares to learn those pitiful tunes. The hours spent at the old harmonium in her father's parlor were hours stolen from cooking and baking, from caring for her younger brothers and sisters, hours which, so long ago, had raised in her imagination sounds and scenes more glamorous than anything found in the borders of the country that was her home. They were not great, these two melodies—one born of Evangelism and the other out of the gaiety of an Austrian city—yet they were in a fashion the little parcel of glamour which life had dealt out to Hattie Tolliver. The rest was work and watchfulness, worries and cares.

There must have been in the woman something magnificent, for never, even in deep recesses of her heart, did she complain of the niggardliness of that tiny parcel. She sought only to wrest a

larger share for her children, for her Ellen who was gone now a-seeking glamour on her own.

And, of course, the sound of the music made by her stiffened fingers may have brought back for a time something of her lost Ellen.

Because there was in Hattie no softness which would allow her to admit defeat, she set about, once the first shock of the affair had softened, to reconstruct all her existence upon a new plan, motivated by a single ideal. How this change came about, she would have been the last to understand. It came, in a sense, as a revelation. She awoke one morning and there it was, clear as the very winter landscape—a vision of the sort which guides people of passionate nature. True, there were circumstances which led her mind in that one direction; there was, to be sure, the look that had come into the blue eyes of her elder son since the day when Ellen had fled. Any one could have seen it, a look so eloquent and so intense, which said, "I too must have my chance. I too must go into the world." Perhaps he remembered the half-humorous promises to help him that Ellen had made so frequently. There was, she knew, a secret sympathy between the two in which she played no part. It was a look which came often enough into the eyes of Hattie Tolliver's family. If the boy had been old enough to reason and understand such things, he might have said, "My grandfathers set out into a wilderness to conquer and subdue it. It was a land filled with savages and adventure. I too must have my chance. I am of a race of pioneers but I no longer have any frontier. I must turn back again, as Ellen has turned, to the east!" In a little while—a few years more—the look was certain to come into the eyes of Robert, the youngest.

And doubtless the woman came to understand that it was impossible any longer to hope that her husband might realize any of the wild and gaudy dreams she had held so often before his philosophic and indifferent eyes. He was a gentleman, and no longer young; he had indeed turned the corner into middle age. What must be done rested with her alone.

And so, understanding that Ellen would never turn back, the plan of her existence ceased to find its being in the smoky Town; it became instead a pursuit of her children. If they would not remain in the home she had made for them then she must follow them, and, like a nomad, place her tent and build her fires where they saw fit to rest.

So she set about planning how it was possible to escape from the Town, to transport all her family and their belongings into a world which she had disliked and even feared but which now must be faced. Fantastical schemes were born, reared their heads and collapsed in a brain which considered nothing impossible. She would herself support them all if necessary, though she had not the faintest idea of how it was to be done. Surely in a great city like New York, there were ways of becoming rich, even fabulously so. She had read stories in the newspapers. . . .

But her first action was a direct one. Dressed in black merino and armed with an umbrella which she carried on important occasions as a general bears his baton, she assailed her enemy Judge Weissman in the sanctuary of his untidy office, and after a scene in which she accused him of thievery, bribery and a dozen other crimes, she bullied him, playing shrewdly upon a horsewhipping incident out of his own past, into using his influence to gain for her husband some new work—not mere work but a position worthy of him and of the dignity of her family.

She won the battle and in her triumph, which mounted higher and higher during the walk home, she gave rein in her unbounded optimism to even wilder and more fantastic schemes. There was relief in the knowledge that at last she had taken things into her own hands. No longer was she to be a power behind the throne urging forward an amiable and indifferent husband. Things must change now. She herself would act. She had achieved an opening wedge. In time she would secure an appointment for her husband in New York. She could take the children there. She could be where she could drop in on Ellen at the Babylon Arms (preposterous name!). She would watch and aid them in their

progress toward success and glory. Ah, she could wrest anything from life. It was, after all, nothing more than a question of energy and persistence.

These thoughts were whirling madly about her brain as she turned the corner into Sycamore Street in time to see a group of children congregated before the path that led into the shaggy domain of the Tollivers. They appeared to be watching something and clung to the gate peering in through the lilacs at the vine-covered house. Unconsciously she increased her pace, and as she approached the gate they fell back, with a look of awe and the sort of animal curiosity which comes into the eyes of children gathered on the scene of a catastrophe. Through their ranks and into the house, she made her way like a fine ship in full sail.

Once inside she learned the news.

It was this—that upstairs in the room once occupied by Ellen there lay on the bed the unconscious form of her father, the invincible Jacob Barr. They told her that the patriarch, while superintending the loading of hay in his mows, had made a misstep and so crashed to the floor twenty feet below. They had brought him to her house on a truss of hay. The doctors, the same doctors whom Gramp Tolliver had baffled, said he might die suddenly or that he might live for years, but he would never walk again.

When she had put the place in order and driven out the confusion which accompanies physicians, she seated herself in a chair opposite the unconscious old man and presently began to weep.

"What good is it now? What difference does it make?" she repeated bitterly over and over again.

Where before there had been but one, there were now two old men to be managed, and Hattie Tolliver, understanding that it was now impossible to follow Ellen, settled herself to waiting. For what? Perhaps for death to claim her own father. It would have been, as she said, a blessing, for the

fracture concerned far more than a hip bone; the very spirit of old Jacob Barr was crushed in that fall from the mows. Sinking back upon the pillows of Ellen's bed, he gave up the struggle. A life in which there was no activity was for him no life at all. He became again like a little child, like his own little children whom his daughter Hattie had cared for through all the years of his widowhood. Sometimes he sang songs and there were hours when he talked to himself and to Hattie of things which had happened when she was a very little girl or before she was born. He lived again in the Civil War and in the days preceding it when the fleeing niggers hid in his great mows. Passers-by in Sycamore Street sometimes heard snatches of singing in a voice now cracked, now loud and strong and defiant. . . . *John Brown's Body lies a-moldering in the Grave, But his Soul goes marching on. Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!*

But Gramp Tolliver in his high room walled with books kept spry and alert, triumphant now in the knowledge that he had survived old Jacob Barr, that the stern virtue of the old Scotsman had not prolonged his health and happiness by so much as an hour. He read his old books and scribbled on bits of yellow paper, ageing not at all, remaining always spare, cynical, vindictive.

In these days his daughter-in-law rarely addressed him, and less and less frequently she came to see that his room was in order. There were other cares to occupy her energy. There was a husband, working now, and two growing boys and her own father to care for; in addition to all these she had taken to sewing, secretly, for friends whose fortunes were better. (She was a magnificent needle-woman.) And she had each day to write a long letter to Ellen, though the letters in return came but weekly and sometimes not so often.

They kept her informed of the bare facts of her daughter's life. They told her, in a new, amusing and somewhat cynical fashion of Ellen's adventures among the music teachers of the city . . . of weeks spent wandering through the bleak and drafty

corridors of studio buildings, tormented with the sounds made by aspiring young musicians. They described the charlatans, the frauds, which she found on every side, teachers who offered every sort of trick and method by which fame and fortune could be reached by the one and only short cut. There were women called Madame Tessitura and Madame Scarlatti, who had been born Smith or Jones and knew less of music than May Seton, and men who wore velvet jackets and insisted upon being called "Maestro." There were the usual adventures (alarming to Hattie Tolliver who saw her daughter still as a little girl) with lecherous old men. Indeed, in this connection Ellen wrote with a certain hard mockery that was utterly strange and carried overtones of an unmoral point of view, as if such things were to be treated more as preposterous jokes than as "grave offenses." And in this Mrs. Tolliver fancied she discerned some traces of Lily's influence. To a woman like Lily, such things didn't matter. She took them too lightly, as a part of the day's experience . . . carefree, charming, indolent Lily, so impossible to combat.

And at last, wrote Ellen, she had stumbled upon the proper person . . . an old man, a Frenchman, who bore the name of Sanson. He knew what music could be, and so she had settled with him, working under his guidance. In his youth he had known Liszt, and he had been a friend of Teresa Carreño, until a quarrel with that temperamental beauty ended the friendship. Ellen, he had hinted, might one day become as famous as Carreño (she was like her in a way) but she must work, work, work and not lose her head. It would be a long hard path with Paris at the end! (It was always this thought which filled Mrs. Tolliver with a nameless dread. Paris! Paris! And Lily!)

But what troubled her most was the absence of any comment upon Clarence beyond a simple statement that he was well. By now she must have realized that Ellen had no love for him. From her letters it was clear that she had not found him actually offensive. He was a good enough husband; he did everything for Ellen. It was, indeed, clear that he worshiped her. But on her

side there appeared to be only a great void, a colossal emptiness where there should have been the emotion that was the very foundation of her mother's life.

Mrs. Tolliver worried too about the expenses of her daughter's household. In such matters, distance made no difference. It was her habit to remark to her husband, "If only I could be near Ellen I could teach her so much about managing. Clarence must make a great deal of money to have such a flat and pay for her lessons too."

And when she questioned Ellen in her letters, she received the reply that Ellen had spoken to her husband and been told that there was no need to worry. He had, he said, plenty of money . . . eight thousand a year.

It is possible of course that Ellen never loved him for an instant; it is probable that the state of her affections never progressed beyond the stage of the kindly pity which is akin to love. She was not a bad wife. She cared for him admirably. She kept his house in order. She even cooked for him delicacies which she had learned from her mother. He insisted that she have a servant, declaring that he could easily afford it. She gave him all that he asked, even of herself, and yet there was a difference . . . a difference with altered everything. It was that difference which Hattie Tolliver, expert in such things, sensed in the letters of her daughter. It filled her with a vague suspicion that Ellen had sold herself to satisfy a thing no greater than mere ambition.

Of Clarence's sentiments there could have been no doubt. He sang his wife's praises to the men at the Superba Electrical Company, to the men whom he met on those trips into the west when Ellen was left behind alone in the Babylon Arms. He bought her present after present until, at length, the whole aspect of their little apartment was changed. Bit by bit the furniture altered its character. First there was a small grand piano, and then a sofa and presently a chair or two, and at last the brass beds

which he and Bunce had once occupied gave place to twin beds of pale green ornamented with garlands of salmon pink roses. And strangely enough as the apartment brightened, the little man himself appeared slowly to fade. In contrast with his handsome and energetic wife, he grew more and more pale. It was as if he were being devoured by some inward malady. Yet there was nothing wrong. Doctors could discover nothing save the usual weakness of his heart.

If he desired a more demonstrative affection than that given him by Ellen, he said nothing of the desire. He never spoke of love. Indeed, long afterward, when Ellen followed back her memories of their life together she was unable to recall any mention of the word. If he desired her passionately he sought her silently and with timidity, as if each caress she gave him were far beyond that which he had any reason to expect. He was a shy man and with Ellen it was impossible to speak of such things; there was a coolness about her, a chastity of the sort which surrounds some women regardless of everything. And always it was she who dominated, always she who gave, coldly and without passion, as if she felt that in all honor she owed him a debt.

With the passing of the months the breach between Ellen and Mr. Wyck became complete. The other friends came sometimes to the Babylon Arms where Clarence, with a sudden expansion of temperament, entertained them in lordly fashion and beamed with pride in his wife. But Mr. Wyck no longer came. There had been no open quarrel, not even a hasty word. Quietly he had dropped from the habit of seeing Clarence at home. It was a change so imperceptible that before Clarence understood it, it was complete.

They met sometimes at lunch in one of the cheap restaurants frequented by Mr. Wyck, for Clarence, so far as his own needs and pleasures were concerned, had taken to a program of economy. And there, over greasy food, they talked of the old days together, Clarence speaking with sentiment and Mr. Wyck with a curious wistfulness. He too had grown pale and cadaverous upon the

diet in his Lexington Avenue boarding house. He hated Ellen. He had hated her from the moment she had stepped through the door of the apartment, so cool and arrogant, so sure of herself. But he was too wise to betray his feeling save in subtle gibes at her and references to the jolly old days that were passed. He was lost now in the obscenities of a boarding house, a nobody treated scornfully even by the old aunts in Yonkers who looked upon him still as an anemic little boy with Fauntleroy curls playing among the iron dogs and deers of their front lawn.

And no one, of course, knew that Mr. Wyck, wrapped in his shabby overcoat, sometimes walked the streets after dark in the neighborhood of Riverside Drive, the gale from the North River piercing his bones, his pale eyes upturned toward the pleasant light that beamed from the top floor of the Babylon Arms.

22

One night nearly two years after they were married, Clarence asked, "What do you hear from your cousin?"

And Ellen, who had been playing all the evening, turned and asked, "What cousin?"

"Miss Shane."

"Oh, Lily!" And a shadow settled on her face as if the mention of Lily's name suddenly aroused memories which she had been striving to forget. "Oh, Lily!" she repeated. "I haven't heard from her in weeks. She never writes. You know she is indolent. . . . When I last heard from her she was all right. She wrote from Nice."

Clarence kept silent for a moment. "Nice must be a beautiful place. A man from the office was there last year, our foreign agent. Nice and Monte Carlo. I guess they're quite close together."

"She has a house there. It's called the Villa Blanche."

Again Clarence remained thoughtful for a time. The newspaper had fallen from his hands and lay now, crumpled and forgotten by his side. Presently he blushed and murmured, "D'you think she might lend us the house some time. . . . We might be able to go there. . . . Not now, but when we have more money. I'd like to see Nice."

And the shadow on Ellen's face darkened. "We will . . . some day. When I'm famous and making money too."

"But I don't want to do it that way. I want to take you myself and pay for everything. . . . We might have Lily come and visit us."

Then to fill in the silence Ellen fell to playing again, softly now so that it did not halt the conversation; yet the sound in some way protected her. It was like the frail veil of lace which Lily wore. It shut her in suddenly. Clarence talked no more. He lay back in his stuffed chair, one hand strumming thoughtfully the wooden arm. A look of loneliness, more and more frequent of late, came into his brown eyes.

It was Ellen who turned to him presently, in the midst of the soft music and said, "I have good news for you. I am going to play to-morrow night in public. I am going to be paid for it. Sanson arranged it. I'm going to play at a party. It will mean money for us both."

But Clarence wasn't pleased. On the contrary he frowned and kept a disapproving silence.

"It's silly to feel that way about it," continued Ellen. "Why should I work as I do if not to make money in the end? Why shouldn't a wife help her husband? There's nothing wrong in it."

And then more music and more silence, while she destroyed slowly, bit by bit, his hopes of grandeur, of conquering a world for the sake of the woman he loved. He saw, perhaps, that despite anything he might do she would in the end surpass him.

"You see, we understood this when we married, Clarence. It's nothing new. . . . Is it? . . . Nothing new. Some day I shall be famous." She said this quite seriously, without the faintest

trace of a smile. "Some day I shall be great and famous. I mean to be."

By now Clarence was leaning forward holding his head in his hands. His glasses had slipped from his pointed nose and lay forgotten in his lap. Presently he interrupted the music to say, mournfully, "And then I shall be Mr. Tolliver . . . husband of a famous woman."

As though amazed by this sudden resentment, Ellen ceased playing for an instant and regarded him with a curious penetrating look.

"It won't be like that," she said. And there entered her voice an unaccustomed note of warmth. It was the pity again, an old sense of sorrow.

"Besides," she continued, "the day will come when I must go to Paris. . . . You see, I will have to polish off there . . . I can live with Lily. It won't cost anything. You see, we can't forget that. We have to think of it. It's nothing new. . . . I told you that in the beginning."

For a long time there was no sound in the room save that of Ellen's music, soft, beautiful, appealing, as if she used it now as a balm for the wounds caused by all she had been forced to say. Presently her strong beautiful fingers wandered into the Fire Music and the tiny room was filled with a glorious sound of flame and sparks, wild yet subdued, thrilling yet mournful. And then for a time it seemed that, wrapped in the color of the music, they were both released and swept beyond the reach of all these petty troubles. When at last the music ceased, Clarence roused himself slowly and, coming to her side, knelt there and placed his arms about her waist, pressing his head against her. There was in the gesture something pitiful and touching, as if he felt that by holding her thus he might be able to keep her always. The little vein in his throat throbbed with violence. There were times when his adoration became a terrible thing.

It was the first time in all their life together that he had ever done anything so romantic, so beautiful, and Ellen, looking down at him in a kind of amazement, must have understood that there were forces at work quite beyond her comprehension—something which, for the moment, overwhelmed even his shame of love. The act, by its very suddenness, appeared to strike a response in the girl herself, for she leaned toward him and fell to stroking his hair.

"I didn't know," she said softly, "that you could be like this. . . . It frightens me. . . . I didn't know."

His arms slowly held her more and more tightly, in a kind of fierce desperation. "You won't go," he murmured, "you won't leave me. . . . There would be nothing left for me . . . nothing in the world."

"I'll come back to you. . . . It won't be for long. Perhaps, if there is money enough you could go with me."

But all the same, she was troubled by that simple act of affection. Somehow, she had never thought of *his* love in this fashion.

The rest of the evening was raised upon a different plane, new and strange in their existence together. Some barrier, invisible as it was potent, had given way suddenly, out of Clarence's dread of the future it seemed that there was born a new and unaccountable happiness. Ellen, watching him slyly with a look of new tenderness, played for him the simple music which he loved.

But at midnight when, at last, the music came to an end Clarence asked, "Where are you going to play to-morrow?"

"At the house of a Mrs. Callendar . . . I don't know who she is."

"If it's Mrs. Richard Callendar . . . she's rich and fashionable. One of the richest women in New York. . . . Rich and fashionable. . . ." But the rest was lost in a sudden return of a bitterness that seized him of late with a growing frequency. He knew of Mrs. Callendar. Wyck, in his snobbery, had spoken of her. One saw her name in the journals. It may have been

that he had thoughts of his own which no one had ever guessed . . . not even Ellen.

"It is Mrs. Richard Callendar," she said.

23

IN the beginning Mrs. Callendar had regretted the sudden indisposition of the great pianist she had engaged. It was, she said, *embétant*. But presently as the hour of the reception drew near, the things which old Sanson had said of his unknown prodigy began to have their effect and, being like most women of affairs, a gambler as well, she saw in the approach of the unknown substitute the possibility of an adventure. She was, in any case, willing to take the word of old Sanson; he was, when all was said and done, no humbug. He knew a performer when he saw one. He did not go about his studio in a coat of velveteen calling upon his pupils to address him as "Maestro." In a satisfactory way, he got down to brass tacks. What he had to offer must at least be interesting.

The drawing-room of the house on Murray Hill was enormous. It extended the full length of one side of the house, finishing in a little alcove where to-night space had been made for the performers, who sat shielded by a lacquered screen reaching almost to the ceiling. Before it a little place had been cleared and a small dais, covered with black velvet, erected to serve as a stage. There was a great piano at one side and then more cleared space reaching out to where the row of collapsible chairs had been placed for the guests.

The room itself was painted gray and high up near the ceiling hung in a row portraits of the Callendars, male and female, who had existed since the immigrating member, an honest Dutch chemist, founded a fortune in America by buying farms that lay north of Canal Street. The usual furniture had been pressed back against the sides of the room or removed entirely, but some of

the pieces remained . . . chairs and sofas of gilt and salmon brocade, American adaptations of the monstrosities of Louis Philippe—the furniture of some preceding Mrs. Callendar. And in gilt cases of glass there ranged the famous Callendar collection of Chinese bric-à-brac . . . bowls and idols of jade, porphyry, and carved sandalwood, row upon row of tear bottles (it was for these that the collection was especially noted) in jade, ivory and porcelain. All these ornaments represented the second period in the fortunes of the Callendar family . . . the days when the clipper ships of Griswold and Callendar carried cargoes around the world from Singapore, Shanghai and Hong-Kong. The fortune was now in its third stage. The clipper ships had vanished and the money they once represented was now safe in the best stocks and bonds it was possible to buy.

The room had never been brought up to date. Indeed it had remained untouched since the Seventies, for Mrs. Callendar spent only a month or two of the year in New York and, being thrifty, had not found it necessary to alter anything. The caretaker, once a year when her mistress returned, sent for a small army of charwomen, dusted, cleaned and scrubbed the old house and engaged a corps of servants. The rest of the time it remained empty but solid, immersed in the quiet dignity which is acquired only by houses of great bankers, a symbol in the midst of less enormous and somber dwellings, of all that is enduring and respectable in a changing effervescent world.

At ten o'clock on this particular evening the lacquer screen concealed behind its shimmering walls the figure of a Russian tenor, a Javanese dancer (really a low caste Hindu woman who had her training in some brothel of Alexandria) and the unknown American girl whom Sanson recommended as a fine artist. They were entertainers, mountebanks, brought together only to divert a crowd of guests, who presently would arrive, jaded and somewhat torpid, from monstrous dinners of twenty courses held in houses from Washington Square as far north as the east Sixties. In the behavior of the three performers there was no great cordiality.

They sat apart, without interest in each other; indeed there were in their manner unmistakable traces of jealousies as old as their very profession.

Sometimes the tiny dancer, with skin like *café au lait* satin, stirred restlessly, setting all her bangles into jangling motion, to address the Russian tenor in bad French. He was an enormous blond man with a chest like a barrel and hands that rested like sausages upon his knees, a man gauche in manner, a little like a bear let loose in a drawing-room . . . a mountain between the little Hindu woman and the American girl who sat a little apart, slim and tall as Artemis, her black hair wound low over a face that was pale with excitement. She knew no French and so, after the first exchange of "Goot eefning!" with her two weird companions, she lapsed into a silence which concentrated all its force upon a crevice in the lacquered screen. Thus she was able to see the whole length of the great drawing-room and witness the spectacle of the arriving guests.

At first there appeared only her employer, a squat, plump woman laced until her figure resembled the hour glass shape of the ladies in Renoir's pictures of bourgeois picnics at St. Cloud. From sources hidden in a veritable upholstery of satin and velvet, so cut as to emphasize all her most voluptuous curves, little ladders and tongues of jet sprang forth and glittered darkly at every motion of her tiny plump feet. The face too was plump and, despite a drooping eyelid (which in her youth might have been fascinating and now only made her appear to be in a constant state of sly observation), it must have been lovely, perhaps even subtle. The tight little mouth had an expression that was pleasant and agreeable. It was as if she said, "Ah, well. Nothing in this world surprises me. It will all come out right in the end."

The sleek black hair she wore pulled back into an uncompromising knot, though in front it was frizzed into a little bang which once might have passed for a weapon of coquetry. Over all this was flung the glittering sheen of jewels, prodigal, indecently

Oriental in their extravagance. Above the fuzzy bang reared a tiara of emeralds and diamonds and beneath, sweeping over the mountainous curve of her bosom so that it entangled itself in the plastrons of diamonds fastened beneath, hung a necklace of emeralds. All these repeated their glitter in the rings on the plump hands emerging from long tight sleeves of black satin, which stretched perilously at each dominating gesture employed to direct the small army of servants. But all the jewels were a little dirty. It was probable that no money had been wasted in cleaning them in more than twenty years.

This, then, was *the* Mrs. Callendar, appearing to-night in *grande tenue* to receive a small and shrewdly picked list of guests at her only entertainment of the season. To Ellen, peering with breathless curiosity through the crack in the screen, this plump middle-aged woman must have appeared a highly bedizened figure of fun; for Ellen, having come freshly from the provinces, could have known nothing of all the glamour and power that lay concealed in the hour glass of velvet, satin, and soiled diamonds.

There was no secretary hired by this thrifty woman to send lists of her guests to the daily papers and see that her picture or paragraphs concerning her appeared once or twice a week. She did not even give twenty course dinners interrupted by false endings of Roman punch, nor circus entertainments like those of some women who filled the pages of the noisier journals with columns of diversion for shop girls. Through the barbaric spectacle of the late nineties and the early nineteen hundreds she made her way quietly and firmly, knowing perhaps that she was above these things, a power beyond power, living most of the year abroad, seeing only those persons who amused her (for she had learned long ago that in order to survive one must be selective). Indeed her name was more likely to appear upon the pages devoted to stocks and bonds than in the columns given over to what was known variously as the *beau monde* and the Four Hundred.

Queerest of all was the fact that behind this stout-willed dowager lay an impossibly romantic past.

In the early Seventies when the steam freighters were making their final inroads upon the business of the clipper ships, the house of Griswold and Callendar, Shippers, Importers and Bankers with offices in Liverpool, New York, Marseilles, Bombay and Shanghai, was already on a decline. Already the capital was being shifted into bonds. In these days there remains of this firm no importing business at all but only a great banking house with offices in Wall and Threadneedle Streets and the Boulevard Haussmann; but in the Seventies it was still a great shipping company whose ships circled the globe and dealt alike with Chinese, Indians, Frenchmen, Greeks, and the men of half a dozen other nations. In consequence of these dealings there arose from time to time many disputes, so that always there was some member of the firm on business in a distant quarter of the world. It was to Richard Callendar, the youngest and most vigorous member and the only Callendar in the firm, that most of this traveling fell; and so, in the course of time, he found himself in Constantinople on the business of settling claims with a crafty fellow, one Dikran Leopopulos, whose bank had offices in Calicut and Alexandria with the main house at the Golden Horn.

The contest between the two was drawn out, resolving itself at length into a battle between Yankee shrewdness and Levantine deceit. Leopopulos, a swarthy fellow with narrow green eyes, opened the engagement by an onslaught of hospitality. He entertained his young visitor in the most lavish and Oriental fashion. There were dinners to which the *chic* foreign world of Constantinople were invited . . . ambassadors, secretaries and their ladies, French, German, English and American, in the banker's palace in Pera; there were *pique-niques* beside the River of Sweet Waters, and moonlight excursions in caïques propelled by dark oarsmen, on the Bosphorus near the Greek banker's summer palace; and excursions in victorias to the ruins of Justinian's fortifications. He sought as a wily means of gaining his end to dazzle the blond, romantic young American, to coddle him by eastern luxury into a false bargain. And to make the entertainment complete, he

brought from her seclusion his young daughter, a girl of eighteen, slim, dark, fresh from a French convent, dressed in the very latest modes from Paris, to preside over his entertainments. The girl's mother was dead, having swooned and later passed away of the heat and confusion at the great Exposition in Paris whither she had gone to visit, after many years, her great-aunts. For the wife of Leopulos had been French, the daughter of an impoverished, moth-eaten Royalist, and in her child, the slim young Thérèse, there was much that was French . . . her wit, her self-possession, her sense of knowing her way about the world. But there was much too that was Levantine.

When at last the revels came to an end, there were bickerings and bargainings in which Yankee shrewdness, in the end, got the better of Levantine deceit. The green-eyed Leopulos to hide his sorrow gave a farewell dinner aboard the young American's ship (a Griswold and Callendar clipper named *Ebenezer Holt*) and so, he believed, closed the incident. It was not until the following day, when a veritable army of fat Greek aunts and cousins, wailing and lamenting, burst at dawn into his green bedroom, that he learned the full extent of his sorrow. His daughter, the dark-eyed Thérèse, had sailed on the *Ebenezer Holt* as the bride of young Richard Callendar.

Thus Thérèse Callendar came to New York, a stranger out of the oldest of worlds entering into the newest, confused a little by her surroundings and by the primness of her husband's family, so like and yet so unlike the caution of her own Greek aunts and cousins. In those early days at long dinners in rooms hung with plush and ornamented with Canalettos and Cabanels, her sensations must have been very like those of an ancient Alexandrian, civilized, cultivated, and a little decadent among the more vigorous and provincial Romans of Cæsar's day. In that age of innocence she found it, no doubt, difficult going; for there was in New York no warm welcome for a foreign woman, no matter how great her beauty, her cultivation, or her charm; much less for a Greek from

such a frontier as Constantinople, the capital of the cruel and abandoned Turk. An alien was a creature to be regarded as a curiosity, to be treated, unless he possessed a great title, politely but with suspicion. She was, to be sure, probably the first Greek who came to live on Manhattan's rocky island; but despite this and all the other barriers, she succeeded in the end, because she was, after all, older than any of them, more civilized, more fortified by those institutions which come only of an old race. In her French blood she was old, but in her Greek blood how much older! She was as old as the carved emerald which she wore always upon her little hand, now so plump with middle age, in a ring which legend had it survived the sack of Constantinople. In tradition she was as old as Justinian and Theodora. The family of Leopopulos was proud—so proud and so old that one no longer discussed its pride and age.

After two years she bore a son, and before the end of that year she became a widow when her ardent young husband, swimming in the surf off Newport, went in his reckless way too far out and never returned. The son she called Richard, after the father, and together with her he inherited the great Callendar fortune, to which was added with the passing of years the gold, the olive orchards, the vineyards, and the palaces of the green-eyed old Banker of Pera. But Thérèse Callendar never married again; she devoted herself to the upbringing of her son and to the husbanding of a great fortune which by shrewdness and will she had long since doubled and tripled. She was, in her soul, a Levantine; thrift and shrewdness were a part of her very flesh and bones. She lived here and there, always on the move, now in Constantinople, now in Paris, now in London, now in Cannes, now in New York, even making at times trips to such outlandish places as Bombay and Sumatra; a woman of sorts, of vast energy and sharp intelligence. And slowly as she passed down the corridor of the years the slim chic figure became on hour glass hung with jet and diamonds. Her eyes were no longer good and she was able to see now only with the aid of lorgnettes through which she

stared with a petulant intensity into the faces of all her companions.

But she was rich; she was respected; she was fashionable. Indeed in those days of the Nineties and the early Nineteen Hundreds when European titles had not yet acquired a doubtful character, she achieved an added glamour through the unsought visits of bankrupt Royalist relatives, distant in relationship but much in need of American heiresses. And at least two of them took home as brides the respective daughters of an American nickel plate king and a wizard of Wall Street. They were gaudy days, less pleasant perhaps in the eyes of Thérèse Callendar than the quiet provinciality she had known in the beginning as the bride of Richard Callendar. This capital of the new world she knew, in the depths of her racial instinct, to be an awkward affair, flamboyant, yet timid; vulgar yet aspiring; arrogant but still a little fearful. It was the day of twenty course dinners and banquets at which the cost of feeding each guest was estimated in the daily press. The Greek woman knew that some day this city would come of age.

So Ellen, trembling with excitement in her hiding place behind the screen, must have caught a little of the smoldering magnificence that lay hidden in the plump corseted figure, for presently she forgot entirely the bearlike Russian tenor and the exotic dancer with her outlandish bangles. She had eyes only for Mrs. Callendar and the guests who had begun to arrive.

That wise hostess might have written an entire book on the subject of an amusing entertainment. From the procession of guests it was clear that she considered them a part of the evening's diversion, a kind of preliminary parade about the arena which provided variety and color. She understood that people came when you provided rich food and amusing types, the more preposterous the better.

A Tzigane orchestra, much in fashion, assembled itself presently and played an accompaniment to the grand march of arriving

guests. Among the first were the Champion girls and their mother. These represented the old families. The two girls, already past their first youth, wore gowns made by Worth, cut low back and front, which fitted their thin bodies in the Princess style. But these gowns, Thérèse saw instantly, they had ruined; for in a moment of caution the deep V's, front and back, had been built up with modest inserts of lace and tulle, and short sleeves of similar material had been inserted to shield the upper portions of their white arms. They held themselves stiffly. Nothing of them remained exposed save the fact that they were virgins.

Close upon their heels, so close that the mother in her haste appeared to shuffle her daughters into a corner with the air of a hen covering her chicks from a hawk, came that elderly rake, Wickham Chase, and Mrs. Sigourney, the latter dressed tightly in black and diamonds rumored to be paste—thin, piercing and hard, too highly painted, a divorcée. (None but Thérèse Callendar would have dared to ask her.) And then Bishop Smallwood, whom Sabine Cane called "The Apostle to the Genteel," a Bishop with a See in the far West, who managed to divide his time between New York and Bar Harbor and Newport . . . a fat, pompous man with a habit of alluding too easily to "My wa'am friend Mrs. Callendar" and "My wa'am friend Mrs. Champion" and "My wa'am friend Mrs. So-and-so" ad infinitum through the lists of the wealthy and the fashionable. Trapped between the Scylla of Mrs. Champion and her Virgins and Charybdis of the questionable but very smart Mrs. Sigourney, the poor man found himself at once in an untenable position. Seeing this, the small eyes of his hostess glittered with a sinful light.

Next came the Honorable Emma Hawksby, a gaunt Englishwoman of some thirty-eight summers with a face like a horse, projecting teeth, and feet that appeared to better advantage in the hedgerows than in the ball room. To-night they emerged barge-like from beneath a very fancy gown of pink satin ornamented with sequins and yards of mauve tulle. It was in her direction

that the anxious Mrs. Champion steered her two virgins. Was she not a cousin of the notorious Duke of Middlebottom?

And then the four Fordyce sisters, arriving unattended in a hollow square formation, large, dark, powerful girls ranging in age from twenty to thirty-one, filled with an inhuman energy and zeal for good works, the very first of those who struggled for the enfranchisement of women.

Then one or two nondescript bachelors, of the handy sort seen everywhere as conveniences, stuffed with food and wine taken at some monstrous dinner in the Thirties; and on their heels Mrs. Mallinson, who belonged in the category of Mrs. Champion and her virgins, but who had escaped years ago into the freedom of the literary world wherein she wrote long novels of society life. She was a hard woman and beginning to sag a little here and there so that she threw up against the ravages of decay bulwarks in the form of a black satin ribbon ornamented with diamonds about her dewlapped throat. She lived outside Paris in a small château, once the property of a royal mistress, and spoke with a French accent. Because she was literary, she was considered, in Mrs. Champion's mind, also Bohemian.

In her hiding place behind the painted screen, the dark eyes of Ellen Tolliver grew brighter and brighter. Behind her the Javanese dancer and the Russian tenor had relapsed into a condition of moribund indifference.

More and more guests filtered into the room, old, young, dowdy, respectable, smart, one or two even a little *déclassée*. They regarded each other for a time, slipping into little groups, gossiping for a moment, melting away into new and hostile clusters, whispering, laughing, sneering, until the whole room became filled with an animation which even the great dinners of two hours earlier could not suffocate.

With the arrival of Lorna Vale the excitement reached its peak; even the gipsies played more wildly. She was an actress! And in those days it was impossible to imagine an actress and the

Champion virgins in the same room. The Bishop stared at her, somewhat furtively to be sure, and Mrs. Champion, quivering, again executed her swooping gesture of protection toward her two daughters. But Mrs. Sigourney, perhaps seeing in her an ally, pierced the surrounding phalanx of eager young men and found a place by her side. Each benefited by the contrast, for the one was large, an opulent beauty with tawny hair, and the other, thin as a hairpin, black and glittering.

Then, during a brief pause in the music, the wide doors opened again and there entered Sabine Cane and Mrs. Callendar's son Richard.

At their approach there was, even in that nervous, chattering throng, a sudden hush, a brief heightening of interest as if the crowd, like a field of wheat, had been swayed faintly for an instant by the swift eddy of a zephyr. Then all was noisy again. It was a demonstration of interest, polite, restrained, as it should have been at a gathering so fashionable, but a demonstration that could not be entirely disguised.

It was in the women that the excitement found its core . . . women who saw in the dark young man a great match for their daughters, girls who desired him for his fortune and his rakish good looks and found the legend of his wild living a secret and sentimental attraction; widows and spinsters who discerned in him matchmaking material of the first order. Beyond doubt the glittering Mrs. Sigourney and the tawny Lorna Vale held other ideas, not to be expressed in so polite an assemblage. He had been, after all, notoriously attentive to both though they were years older. But there was one element in the situation which raised the interest to the pitch of hysteria; it was his attention to Sabine Cane, a fact of growing importance which many a jet-hung bosom found hard to support.

She was a year or two older than Richard Callendar (every woman present could have told the very hour she made her entrance into society) and she was not, like most of young Callen-

dar's women, an acclaimed beauty. Yet there were other qualities which set her aside from the commonplace round of marriageable girls. She was easily the most smartly dressed in all the room; there was about her clothes a breathless sort of perfection that bespoke the taste of an artist. In place of an overwhelming beauty, she had developed a wit that could be infinitely more disastrous. In this, she resembled Cleopatra, Madame de Staël and the Montespan. These things made her perilous and caused many an ambitious mother hours of sleeplessness.

A long nose, a generous mouth frankly painted, green eyes set a trifle too near each other, a mass of brick red hair and a marvelous figure . . . these things comprised the physical aspect of Sabine Cane, a combination that was changeable and a trifle bizarre and therefore, as Thérèse Callendar had observed more than once, enormously *intrigante*. But there was more than this, for in the green eyes there lay a light of humor and malice and beneath the brick red hair a brain which had a passion for the affairs of other people. What disconcerted her enemies most was her air of entering a room; she did not walk in, she made an entrance. It was as if such women as Mrs. Sigourney and Lorna Vale did not exist. Lily Langtry or Cléo de Merode were less effective. To-night she wore a brilliant yellow dress with a wide full train. It was as if she understood shrewdly her ugliness and made capital of it.

Sabine knew things about these people who filled the drawing room—little bits of gossip, scraps of information picked up here and there in the course of her twenty-six years. She knew, for example, that Mrs. Champion (mother of the virgins and most rarefied of aristocrats) had a grandmother known as Ruddy Mary who in her first assault upon the social ranks had invited people to a monstrous ball by invitations written in red ink, and so gained a sobriquet that was now forgotten. She knew that Wickham Chase had a maternal grandfather who had been a Jewish pawnbroker and laid up the money which he now spent. She knew that the Honorable Emma Hawksby (niece of the no-

torious Duke of Middlebottom) was without a cent in the world and found an easy winter in New York by living off those who liked to speak of the dear Duke's cousin. "Honorable" was not a great title, but it went far enough in those days to keep the Honorable Emma in bed and board for the winter. She even knew that a brother of the Apostle to the Genteel had to be kept, at some expense to the Apostle, in an out of the way country town in order that he might not make a drunken spectacle of himself before the Apostle's many "wa'am friends."

Sabine kept a great many family skeletons in her clever memory and it was impossible to know the moment when she might bring them forth and rattle them in the most grisly fashion.

It was clear that her companion, shrewder than the well-fed young men about him, penetrating with those instincts which came to him from the plump bundle of satin and diamonds who stood receiving the guests, understood perfectly the atmospheric disturbance. He was young, clever, handsome in a fashion that was a little sinister, and very rich, so rich that the whispers of gossip that clustered about him—even the talk of Mrs. Sigourney and Lorna Vale—made no difference. Mrs. Champion found him not entirely beneath consideration as a possible match for Margaret or Janey, the redoubtable virgins.

"Look at Boadicea and her daughters," Sabine whispered maliciously in his ear as they came abreast of this virtuous group.

Young Callendar was tall, with dark skin, closely cropped black hair and a wiry kind of strength that was an heritage of his green-eyed grandfather, the Banker of Pera. When Sabine said "Boadicea," he laughed and showed a row of fine teeth set white against an olive skin. It was this same dark skin which gave his eyes a look of strangeness. The eyes should have been brown or black; instead they were a clear gray and had a way of looking at a person as if they bored quite through him. People said he was fascinating or wild or vicious, according to their standards of such things. The women morbidly watched his greeting of Mrs. Sigourney and Lorna Vale, but they discovered

nothing. All the talk may only have been gossip. He was, after all, only twenty-four . . . a boy. But, of course, he had French and Greek blood and had lived on the continent. "That," said Mrs. Mallinson, the escaped novelist, with an old world air, "makes a difference."

Behind the screen, the Hindu dancer had begun to droop a little with boredom, like a dark flower turning on its stem. Close by her side the bear-like Russian dancer had fallen asleep, his enormous blond head bent forward against his rumpled shirt front; his enormous hands, bursting the seams of his civilized white kid gloves, hung limp between Herculean thighs clad in black broadcloth that would have benefited by a visit to the cleaners.

Only Ellen remained alert and nervous, peering through her crevice, all interest now in the handsome young man and the bizarre red-haired woman at his side. These, her instinct told her, were characters, individuals, powerful in the same fashion that the plump little woman covered with dirty diamonds was powerful. And deep down in her heart a tiny voice kept saying, "This is the great world. Some day I shall be on the other side of the screen, seated no longer with mountebanks."

Behind the screen she experienced a swift tumult of emotions, confused and ecstatic like the sensations she had known on sight of her first play in a real theater. The scene was glamorous, extravagant. Perhaps for an instant she caught a sense of what was really passing before her eyes; it may have been that she understood the spectacle even more clearly than any of the participants save only Thérèse Callendar . . . that these people were not gathered in the tomb-like room because they were drawn by any bond of affection, but rather because they had been summoned, each of them, to play his little rôle in a comedy of manners which the world called fashionable life. There was the Bishop who played a part quite his own (two bishops would have been too many and so, by giving the evening a clerical aspect, have

dulled the edge of its *chic*). Mrs. Sigourney, wicked and painted, played the rôle of Sin, a fascinating and indispensable part, just as Mrs. Champion and her virgins as Virtue, Purity and Chastity, were her foil; and Mrs. Mallinson and Lorna Vale were the Muses of Literature and the Drama. Others stood for Family, and Wealth and what-not, while Mrs. Callendar, hidden behind the drooping lids of her near-sighted green eyes, understood all this and pulled the strings. She made for the piece an admirable showman.

Ellen, watching them, grew excited, and out of this excitement there emerged slowly a new ambition, which had nothing to do with a career in music. It was, rather, a passionate desire to conquer this world as well, so that she might fling her triumph back into the world of the Town; it would serve as an admirable weapon to flaunt in the faces of those who had mocked her poverty. For she had not yet escaped the Town; she had not even learned how difficult it would be ever to escape.

The Russian tenor was a dismal failure. Save for the fact that he was Russian and therefore wildly exotic, he would have been impossible, for he sang in a bleating voice a popular ballad or two by Tosti and a dreary bit of folk music, still half-caught in the mists of slumber. In the back of the room, seated against the wall so that the figures of the other guests rose in silhouette between them and the lights of the low stage, Richard Callendar and the ugly Sabine sat like naughty children, jeering. They were bored by such spectacles; they were interested only in the individuals which comprised it. They saw that the others were a little restless.

And then there was a brief hush broken presently by the music of the Tzigane orchestra augmented by drums and clarinets, rising slowly at first and then breaking into a crescendo of Arab music, filled with insinuating and sensual rhythms, accentuated by the beating of a tom-tom, and from behind the lacquered screen there arose a faint tinkling sound like the music of a million tiny

bells heard from a great distance. Then as the music rose to a climax the sound grew suddenly more and more clear and from behind the screen sprang the Javanese dancer, gyrating, now bending low, now rising with a motion of a tawny lily swept by a breeze. It was a beautiful body, soft yet muscular, wild yet restrained. She wore the costume of a Burmese dancer, all gold with a towering hat like a pagoda made all of gold. Her breasts were covered with gold and her thighs, and on her hands she wore gauntlets of gold that ran out into long tapering pinnacles; but the rest of her was naked. The skin of *café au lait* satin glistened, voluptuous and extravagant. There were tiny gold bells on her wrists and ankles.

For an instant a faint gasp, barely audible, swept the little group seated on collapsible chairs. From her hiding place in the shadows Sabine Cane nudged her companion and whispered again, "Look at Boadicea!"

Before her eyes, between her and the dancer, Mrs. Champion had raised her fan; her daughters had done likewise. Between her and "his wa'am friend" Mrs. Mallinson, the Bishop stirred uneasily. Some leaned forward; others feigned indifference. One or two of the men assumed expressions of boredom. For none of them, save in brothels in Paris, had ever seen a woman dancing without tights, utterly naked.

Withdrawn a little from the others Thérèse Callendar sat staring at the dancer through her lorgnettes. She was immovable but interested, as if the barbaric music and the sight of the Hindu woman's naked body roused in her a train of dim racial memories. And slowly in another part of the room Sabine Cane became aware that Thérèse Callendar's son no longer had any interest in her. He no longer heard the malicious sallies she uttered in a whisper. He had risen now and was standing so that he might have a clearer view of the little dais bathed in light where the golden dancer swayed and whirled to the wild music of the Tziganes. Slowly his body stiffened and into the weird gray eyes there came a look of fierce concentration. The dark muscular hands, clasp-

ing the chair, so near to Sabine that she could have touched them, grew taut and white. It was not mere sensuality that was roused by the sight; Sabine, with her hard intelligence, must have known that it was something more profound, something that savored of a passionate and barbaric excitement, as if the man was stirred in the depths of his spirit. She must have understood then for the first time that he was of a race so different, so alien that there was a part of him forever beyond comprehension.

Sabine said nothing. Fascinated, she watched him quietly until, as the music died suddenly, the dancer stood motionless as a statue of bronze and gold. There was a ripple of embarrassed applause and she disappeared, then another hush and the nervous murmur of many voices. On her little throne Thérèse, like a plump Buddha, nodded her approval and beat her plump hands together. "C'est une vraie artiste," she murmured, leaning toward Mrs. Sigourney, in whose eyes there glittered the light of jealousy at being outdone in spectacularity by a hired entertainer.

In her corner Sabine said, "Beautiful!" To which young Callendar made no reply. He fingered his mustache and presently, smiling slowly, he murmured, "Mama shouldn't have done it. She has shocked some of them. This isn't Paris. Not yet!"

They were different from the others—Thérèse and her son.

While he was still speaking the gypsies deserted the stage, leaving it bare now save for the great piano. Again a brief hush and there emerged from behind the painted screen with a curious effect of abruptness and lack of grace a tall girl, very tall and very straight, with smooth black hair done in the style of Cléo de Merode and cheeks that were flushed. She wore a plain gown of black very tight and girdled with rhinestones that, shimmering, threw off shattered fragments of light as she walked. Her strong white arms were bared to the shoulder. There was pride in her walk, and assurance, yet these things hid a terror so overpowering that only those who sat quite near saw that her lip was bleeding where she had bitten it.

On her little throne Thérèse Callendar in cold blood waited. She wondered, doubtless, whether Sanson had failed her, and slowly she began to perceive that he had not. Somehow as she emerged from behind the screen, the American girl captured the imagination of her audience; it was as if she dominated them by some unreal power. They stirred and looked more closely. It was not altogether a matter of beauty, for the dancer who had preceded her was by all the rules far more beautiful. It was something beyond mere physical beauty. It emanated from her whole body, running outward, engulfing all the little audience. They became aware of her.

"Hm!" murmured Mrs. Callendar. "Here is something new. Something magnificent. A born actress . . . crude still, but with magnetism!" And she raised her lorgnettes and peered very hard with her short sighted little eyes.

To Richard Callendar, Sabine murmured, "Interesting! Who is she?"

"She's very handsome. . . . A discovery of Mama's."

And then, seating herself the girl began after a shower of liquid notes, to play, softly and suggestively, a Chopin valse, one that was filled with melody and simple rhythm. After the hot passion of the dancer she filled the great room with the effect of a soft wind infinitely cool and lovely, serene in its delicacy. She appeared presently to forget her fright and gave a performance that was beautiful not alone in sound but in manner as well. It may have been that old Sanson taught her that a great performance meant more than merely making beautiful sounds. All her face and body played their part in the poise, the grace of every movement, the sweep and the gesture. But it is more probable that she was born knowing these things, for they are a matter more of instinct than of training and lie thus beyond the realm of mere instruction.

There could be no doubt of the impression she made, yet in all the audience there was none, unless it was old Thérèse Callendar, who suspected that she had never before played in the presence of

anything but a small town audience. There was in her performance the fire of wild Highland ancestors, the placidity of English lanes, the courage of men who had crossed mountains into a wilderness, perhaps even the Slavic passion of a dim ancestress brought from Russia to live among the dour Scots of Edinburgh, the hard, bright intelligence of Gramp, and the primitive energy of Hattie Tolliver. There was all the stifled emotion pent so long in a heart dedicated to secrecy, and the triumph of wild dreams; and there was too a vast amount of passion for that little company who believed in her, whom she dared not betray by failure . . . for Lily whose very gown she wore, and the withered Miss Ogilvie; for Gramp, and young Fergus who worshiped her with his eyes, for her gentle father and the fierce old woman in Shane's Castle; but most of all for that indomitable and emotional woman whom she must repay one day by forcing all the world to envy her.

When she had finished she was forced to return because overtones of all this wild emotion had filtered vaguely into the very heart of the restless, distracted audience on stiff collapsible chairs. They applauded; it was as if she had suddenly claimed them.

Then she played savagely the Revolutionary Prelude and disappeared behind the lacquered screen. There was a hush and then more talk and then a sudden excitement which began at the screen and ran in little ripples through all the stiff gathering. From the alcove there emerged the bass rumbling of the Russian, stirred suddenly into somnolent activity, and again a wild tinkling of little bells and a torrent of French in the shrill voice of the Javanese dancer. The screen parted and the dancer, half naked, covered only by the heavy gold ornaments and a wrapper of scarlet silk, emerged chattering French and gesticulating. She addressed Mrs. Callendar who stirred herself into a sudden dull glitter of movement. The son left the ugly Sabine and joined his mother, calm but with a fierce, bright look in his eyes. The American girl . . . the unknown pianist had fainted!

WHEN at length Ellen became conscious of her surroundings, it was with the faint odor of stables in her nostrils and in her ears the jingling of harness and the steady, brisk clop! clop! made by the hoofs of spirited horses upon wet asphalt. The cabriolet, flitting through the streaks of light made by street lamps on the wet pavement, was passing through an open space where the light shone on the bare branches of trees and banks of wet and dirty snow. Otherwise everything was silent.

When she stirred presently and moved into an upright posture, she saw by her side a mass of sable, the sudden glint of a brilliant yellow dress, captured and fixed by a stray beam of light and then the face and bright lips of the bizarre woman with red hair, who stirred and murmured,

"It's all right. I'm Miss Cane. On the other side is Mr. Callendar . . . Mrs. Callendar's son."

The dark man removed his top hat and bowed. "We're taking you home," he said, "to the Babylon Arms. . . . That's right, isn't it?"

There was a faint trace of accent in his voice . . . vaguely familiar, confused somehow with a memory of mimosa and the figure of Lily standing beneath the glowing Venice in the drawing room of Shane's Castle. The same sort of accent. . . .

"That's right, isn't it?" continued the voice of the dark young man. "The Babylon Arms?"

Then for the first time, Ellen spoke, slowly and with a certain shyness. "Yes. I live there. . . . But how did you know?"

The man laughed. "Two reasons," he said. "First. Sanson told my mother. Second. My mother owns the Babylon Arms."

Again a wandering ray of light flitted across the window of the cabriolet illuminating for an instant the brilliant lips of Miss Cane. The lips were smiling, as if conscious that they were shielded by the darkness, but it was a mocking smile and the mem-

ory of it haunted Ellen long afterward. It was as if the painted lips were really speaking and said, "The Babylon Arms is a preposterous pretentious place." And for the first time, perhaps, Ellen doubted the magnificence of that vast pile.

Her next speech was dictated by the careful precepts of Hattie Tolliver. "I'm sorry," she said. "I shouldn't have fainted. . . . It ruined everything."

There was a stifled laugh from Sabine Cane. "Nonsense! It gave us a chance to get into the air."

Then silence once more and the echoing clop! clop! clop! clop! regular as the beams of light which flashed past the open door of Thérèse Callendar's cabriolet.

Long after midnight the carriage came to a halt before the gigantic Syrian lions of cast iron that ornamented the entrance to the Babylon Arms. It was young Callendar who descended first, lending his arm with a grave and alien grace to Ellen who, having recovered entirely, emerged with a sure and vigorous step. The third occupant, instead of remaining behind as she might well have been expected to do, followed them, driven by an overpowering desire to miss nothing. So with Ellen between them, Callendar in a top hat, and Sabine Cane, muffled in sables and holding her full yellow train high above the wet pavements, descended upon the astonished negro who ran the elevator.

Here Ellen bade them good night. "I'm all right now. . . . It was good of you to have come."

But they insisted upon accompanying her. There were protests, into which there entered a sudden note of desperation as if the girl were striving to conceal something which lay hidden at the top of the flamboyant apartment.

"But you might faint again," protested Sabine firmly. "I shan't be satisfied until I see you safe in your flat."

"Besides," observed young Callendar, smiling, "some day the Babylon Arms will be mine. I should like to see what it looks like, abovestairs."

So they pressed her until at last she yielded and in their company was borne aloft in the swaying elevator. As it jolted to a halt, she bade them good night once more, saying, "The elevator only runs this far and I live two flights above. I'll go the rest of the way alone."

But they went with her through the red painted corridors under the light of the flickering gas up the flights of stairs to a door which she opened with her own key. There at last the farewells were made, for she did not invite them to enter.

"My mother will call in the morning," said Callendar, "to see that you are not really ill. . . . Oh yes! You couldn't prevent her! You don't know her as well as I do!"

"Good night."

"Good night."

And as the door closed they caught a sudden glimpse of a man, standing timidly in the dim light of an inner room, listening with an air of curiosity to their talk. He was a small man and rather thin, and stood dressed in a shirt and trousers. His hair was rumpled; obviously he had been "sitting up." Behind him there was a table covered with papers and accounts. All this the shrewd eye of Sabine captured in one swift instant.

As they descended under the guidance of the negro, Callendar said, "The man . . . who was he?"

"Some one . . . perhaps her lover. Musicians have lovers. . . ."

Her companion turned sharply. "No . . ." he said, "not a lover. A woman with such spirit wouldn't have that sort of lover."

Sabine laughed softly and with a hint of wickedness in her voice. "You don't know women . . . how queer they can be. Besides . . ." And she indicated with a nod of her red head the listening negro. "One must be careful." But she regarded Callendar with a new interest and during the long ride back through the park she remained silent save to comment now and then upon the bits of gossip which he discussed. Knowing him so well, perhaps she understood that a new source of disturbance had crossed

his path. There was between them a remarkable sense of intimacy, as if each expected the other to understand him perfectly.

By the time they reached the solid house on Murray Hill the party was already on the wane and the guests had begun, in a motley stream, to leave. Mrs. Champion and her daughters disappeared among the first after Mrs. Callendar had the audacity to bring forward the artists and beg them to join the guests. The Russian tenor stood awkwardly alone and in a corner and the tiny dancer, in a turban and gown of crimson and gold brocade, sat surrounded by young men. She had learned the business of entertaining during those early days in Alexandria.

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The prediction of young Callendar came true, for in the morning, while Ellen sat in a purple wrapper practising her scales, the bell rang suddenly and into the room came Mrs. Callendar, dressed coquettishly in a very tight black suit, a hat much too large for her short, plump figure, and a voluminous stole of sable. The climb up the two flights of stairs above the elevator had been very nearly too much for her and she greeted Ellen with much panting and blowing.

"Good morning, my dear," she said. "I hope you're none the worse for last night's experience."

Ellen smiled respectfully and bade her guest seat herself in the padded arm chair that was the property of Clarence. "I'm all right again. I can't imagine what could have made me faint. I'm sorry. It must have spoiled the party."

At this Mrs. Callendar, settling herself in the chair, chuckled, "Not at all. Not at all. They'll talk of it for days. You could not have done better. It was dramatic . . . dramatic."

"I'm all right. You needn't have come. It is good of you."

"Perhaps you lace too tightly," suggested Mrs. Callendar, returning to the subject of Ellen's collapse.

"I don't lace at all," said Ellen. "I can't play if I'm all boxed in."

Mrs. Callendar threw back her stole and nodded her head sagely. "You're much wiser, my dear. Much wiser. When I was a girl I was famous for my waist. Sixteen inches it was . . . only sixteen inches." And she brought together her plump fingers in a gesture which implied that once she might have encircled her waist with her two hands. "But I fainted . . . I used to faint daily. I don't lace tightly any more, but it makes no difference. It's just stayed that way. You see, my corsets are quite loose." And she thrust a finger into the space between her ample bosom and her corset to prove her statement. "I know my figure is bad in these days. Too many curves and too little height. But I'm past forty and it doesn't matter so much."

Secretly Ellen must have compared the figure of her guest with that of her own vigorous mother. Mrs. Tolliver was ten years the older, yet her appearance was that of a woman much younger than Mrs. Callendar. It was in this difference that the Levantine blood of the latter betrayed her. She was a friendly woman, certainly, and one who was quite sure of herself, fortified clearly by the conviction that the king can do no wrong.

"You shouldn't have climbed the stairs just to see if I was all right."

"But you see," said Mrs. Callendar, "I'm interested in you. Sanson tells me you have a great future. He doesn't tell me such things if he doesn't believe them. . . . But don't let that turn your head. Nothing comes without work . . . least of all, anything to do with the arts."

For a moment Ellen did not reply. At last she said, thoughtfully, "I know that."

"You are bitter," observed Mrs. Callendar, "and perhaps unhappy," she added with a shrewd glance of her near sighted eyes. "Well, that's a good thing. It shows character, and no artist ever existed without character. Character is the thing that counts." Here, having regained her breath, she rose and placing

the lorgnettes against her slanting eyes, she wandered to the window. "It's a fine view you have from here," and after a moment's consideration, "Not so fine as it appears at first. Too many locomotives and signboards. You see," she added, turning toward the girl, "I came here this morning for other reasons too. I own the Babylon Arms."

"So your son told me."

"But I've never seen it before. I'm only in New York for a month or two at a time. I own a great deal of property here and there. I don't have to look at it. I have a good agent . . . a young Jew, trustworthy . . . a fellow who knows values up and down. I pay him well and he knows that if he played me a trick, I'd throw him out at once. Oh, I can trust him. Besides, I'm a Levantine myself and in every Levantine there is a Jew hidden away. We understand each other . . . Minsky and I. It's a fine building but the elevator ought to run all the way up. Then I could charge you more rent. I suppose there's no room for it. The architect made these upper floors too fancy. No eye for comfort and common sense."

And having uttered this torrent of opinions, she returned to the plush chair and said, "But tell me about yourself. I have a terrible curiosity about people. You're American, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Ellen. There was about this preposterous visitor a quality that was irresistible. It was impossible to know whether you liked or disliked her, because she gave you no time to consider. Even if you decided against her, it availed nothing; she swept over you with the persuasion of a mountain torrent . . . a powerful woman and one whose friendliness was disarming. For a moment or two, the absurd thought that she might have been drinking lingered in Ellen's mind.

"Well," observed Mrs. Callendar, "some day this raw country is going to produce a superb art. Maybe you're one of the first artists. Who can say?" Fumbling in the reticule of black jet she brought out at last a tiny cigarette case, made of onyx with

the name Thérèse in small diamonds, a bizarre box which in the possession of a woman less powerful and less foreign would have been vulgar. "I suppose you smoke?"

"No," said Ellen, "I never have."

"Well, you will." And she thrust the case back into the reticule. "You don't mind if I do?"

"Certainly not." Ellen brought out the small table consecrated to the smoking apparatus of her husband. It was a violation of Clarence's principles. On this subject he had spoken to Ellen many times, saying always, "Women who smoke are all of one kind."

"Wouldn't you have a cup of tea or a bit of cake?" asked Ellen. "I owe you something for the climb up the stairs."

"Thank you, no. Not at this hour of the day, and besides there is my figure to consider. It is real suffering to possess at the same time a tendency toward fat and an appetite for rich food."

She paused for a moment to breathe in the smoke of the tiny scented cigarette. All this time her eyes, aided by the lorgnettes, had been roving the room, as if somewhere within its walls she might find other clues to Ellen's history. To Ellen this action must have been disconcerting, especially since the drooping lid which half concealed one eye of the visitor made it impossible ever to know in what direction or in what object she was interested.

"But tell me about yourself," she continued. "You like Sanson?"

"He is a good teacher."

"No monkey business about him . . . no fanfaronade and nonsense. I've known him a great many years. I see him in Paris more often than here. He's not so busy over there."

Ellen sat on the edge of her chair, like a school girl in the presence of an elderly aunt. In the age and self-possession of her guest there was some quality which caused her to feel an awful sense of youth and inexperience. "I'm going to Paris to study in a year or two," she said modestly. It was almost as if Mrs. Candler had the power of making her enact a rôle.

"Of course. So you must. Nobody here would pay to hear an American musician. And you must take a foreign name. That's important. Some day it won't be. But it is now. We're still afraid to trust ourselves. People spend money for names as well as music. You must have a good foreign name, the fancier the better so long as it doesn't sound like a music hall. Have you any friends over there?"

"I have a cousin." Her manner was better now, a little more contained and far less shy, for the amazing friendliness of Mrs. Callendar had begun to accomplish the inevitable effect. This dowager was perhaps the first woman in all the city who had been friendly toward her, the first woman who had not been a little on her guard, a little uncertain . . . the way Bunce's wife was uncertain and hostile. And there was something in the manner of Mrs. Callendar which must have reminded Ellen of her mother . . . a certain recklessness, a quality that was quite beyond barriers of any sort.

"Is the cousin male or female?" asked Mrs. Callendar, "because in Paris it makes a difference."

"Female," replied Ellen.

"Indeed! Perhaps I know her?"

"Her name is Shane," said Ellen. "Lily Shane."

For a time Mrs. Callendar regarded the blue smoke of her cigarette in silence, thoughtfully. "Shane," she murmured, "Shane? I don't think I know any one named Shane? I know most of the Americans in Paris. Has she lived there long?"

"Many years."

"Shane? Shane?" Mrs. Callendar continued to murmur with an air of searching the recesses of her excessively active brain; and then, all at once, she grew alert. "Shane! Shane! Of course. Reddish hair. Tall. Beautiful. Madame Shane. I've never met her, but I've seen her somewhere. She's been pointed out to me . . . maybe at the races, maybe at the Opéra. Madame Shane . . . to be sure. A beauty! A widow, isn't she?"

There was in Ellen's reply no haste: indeed she waited for a

long time as if turning the simple inquiry over and over in her mind. Lily a widow! Lily who had never been married! She did not, as her mother might have done, spring impulsively to a blundering answer. Perhaps out of her memory there emerged old thoughts, old gossip, bits of instinct and emotion which presently fashioned itself into a comprehensible pattern—such things as her own pride of race, the tribal sense that was so strong in her family, the memory of gossip about a child, indeed all those fragments of mystery which surrounded the existence of her cousin. When she replied it was calmly in a manner that protected Lily. “Yes,” she said, “a widow. That’s the one,” as if nothing had occurred that was in the least surprising.

“A beautiful woman,” continued Mrs. Callendar crushing out the ember of her cigarette upon the tray dedicated to the ashes of Clarence. “And now,” she added, “coming to the point, I wanted to know whether you would come sometimes and play for me in the evenings. . . . Not a performance, you understand, but simply to play once in a while for me and perhaps my son and Miss Cane and one or two friends. . . . Miss Cane—you may remember her—came home with you last night . . . a clever woman. I’d pay you well . . . understand that. I’d like to have you once or twice a week. I don’t go out frequently. I love music but I dislike musicians. You’ll understand that when you come to see more of them.”

For Ellen it was, of course, the opening of a new world in which she might become independent, a world such as she had imagined the city to be. It was as if, overnight, the whole course of her life had been changed. There were chances now, subtle, hidden gambits for which she had an instinct.

“Yes,” she replied quietly. “I think I could arrange it to come.”

“And very likely,” said Mrs. Callendar, “I could get other engagements for you.” She had risen now and was wrapping the sable stole about her short fat neck. “I’ll let you know when I’ll want you to come. I’ll write you a note that will be a sort of

contract between us. I believe in contracts. Never trust the human race. . . . And now good-by, Miss Tolliver. I'm glad you're all right again. You may have fainted out of fright. There were people there last night . . . stupid people . . . who would have frightened Rubinstein himself."

So Ellen thanked her, bade her good-by and walked with her to the top of the stairs. Half way down, Mrs. Callendar turned. "I suppose," she said with a rising inflection, "that you live here alone."

"No," said Ellen; but that was all she said, and Mrs. Callendar, smiling to herself, disappeared amused, no doubt, by the memory of the story which Sabine Cane had told her when she had returned across the park from the Babylon Arms.

Once the door was closed, Ellen flung herself into a chair and sat staring out of the window into the gray clouds that swept across the sky high above the North River. It must have occurred to her then that Mrs. Callendar had departed with an amazing amount of information . . . knowledge which concerned herself and her family, her future, her plans, even the details of the very flat in which she lived. Her guest had, after a fashion, absorbed her and her life much as a sponge absorbs water. By now Mrs. Callendar could doubtless have drawn a detailed and accurate picture of the flat and written a history of its occupant. Indeed she had very nearly tripped Ellen into one unfortunate truthfulness. That was a fascinating thought . . . Lily and her strange foreign life. Lily a widow? What were her morals? How did she live in Paris? Surely no one in the Town could have had the faintest idea. But *Madame Shane!* Still Mrs. Callendar might have been mistaken. It would have been, under the circumstances, a natural error. It was as though Lily was destined in some unreal fashion to play a part in Ellen's own life. Always she was there, or at least some hint of her. Even Clarence talked of her in a way he did not use when speaking of other women. Yet no one knew anything of Lily.

Smiling dimly she rose, and before returning to her music she took the brass ash tray containing the remains of Mrs. Callendar's scented cigarette and cleaned it thoroughly, taking care to bury the offending morsels well out of sight where Clarence could never find them. Certainly she performed this act through no fear of him. Rather it was with an air of secrecy as if already she and her visitor had entered into a conspiracy. It may have been only a touch of that curious understanding which flashes sometimes between persons of great character.

26

THE life of Mr. Wyck was no longer of interest to any one; yet there were times, usually after a stronger dose than usual of his wife's power and independence, when Clarence sought the company of Wyck with the air of a man in need of refreshment and rest. For she had brought into the lives of both men a sense of strain which, during the days of their amiable companionship on the top floor of the Babylon Arms, had been utterly lacking. To Clarence, this new condition of affairs remained a mystery; but Wyck, with an intuition that was feminine, must sometimes have come close to the real reason.

He knew, beyond all doubt, that Ellen, for all her indifference, was his enemy—an enemy who never once considered her foe, an enemy who in her towering self-sufficiency had not troubled to include him in her reckoning. There were times, during the lunches the two men had together in a tiny restaurant in Liberty Street, when he came very close to speaking the truth, so close that Clarence, moved by a shadowy and pathetic loyalty, turned the talk of his companion into other channels. People said that a wife made a difference with one's friends, that marriage ended old friendships and began new ones. There were, to be sure, old ones that had come very near to the end of the path, but in their

place there were no new ones. It was wonderful how Ellen appeared to exist without friends.

"She is busy, I suppose," he confided in admiration to Wyck over the greasy table, "and she is more independent than most women but still I don't see how she stands it. She might have had Bunce's wife for a friend."

Wyck said, "Oh, no! *She's* not good enough for her." And then as if he had spoken too bitterly, he added, "I can understand that. Bunce's wife is a vulgar woman." He had never forgiven the contractor's daughter the theft of Bunce. He hated her so strongly that in order to disparage her, it was necessary by comparison to reflect praise upon another enemy.

There were at times long silences when neither man spoke at all, for even their talk of shop came to an end after it had been turned over and over a hundred times. What thoughts occurred in those tragic silences neither one could have revealed to the other because they were in the realm of those things which friends, or even those who cling to the rags of friendship, cannot afford to tell each other.

Clarence with his nose-glasses and neat white collar drank his thin coffee and thought, "Wyck is a dull fellow. How could I ever have liked him? Funny how men grow apart."

And across the table Wyck, finishing his apple sauce, thought, "Ah, if only there was some way to save him. That woman is destroying him slowly, bit by bit. He should never have married her. If only I could get him back where he would be happy again."

There were in these thoughts the vestiges of truth. At one time they were more filled with truth than at another, for no thing is true persistently and unutterably. Yet in their truth Clarence was the happier of the two because he had discovered in his marriage a freedom of a new and different sort; through Ellen he was strong enough to yield nothing to the shabby little man who sat opposite him. In some way he had caught a sense

of her independence, a knowledge that she was not as other women, or even as most men. She belonged to the ruthless and the elect. As for Wyck, he had only his sense of loss, for which there was no reward, and a pang which he was resolved one day to heal by some revenge, as yet vague and unplanned. And in his heart he believed that friendship between men was a bond far finer, far more pure than any relation between a man and woman.

"See!" he thought, over his apple sauce, "what it is doing to Clarence. It is destroying him. His love for her is consuming him."

And when they had finished eating and had paid the yellow-haired cashier who sat enthroned behind the till, it was their habit to saunter into the streets and lose themselves in the noon crowds of lower Broadway. Sometimes they wandered as far as the Battery to sit on a bench and watch the fine ships going proudly across a bay of brilliant blue out to the open sea. But there was not much pleasure in their promenade. It ended always in the same fashion with Clarence looking at his watch to observe, "It's time we started back."

And so they would return, back the same way over the same streets and over the same doorstep. There were times when the sight of the blue sea and the great ships sliding silently through the green water filled the heart of Mr. Wyck with a wild turbulence which was beyond his understanding. Those were times when he hated both his friend and the woman who held him prisoner.

But no one was really interested in Mr. Wyck. In the evening when he returned to the gas-lit bed room in Lexington Avenue there was nothing for him to do. He read sometimes, but not frequently, and on warm nights he sat on the doorstep watching the passers-by and exchanging a word now and then with the grim woman who was his landlady. There were long hours in which there was nothing to do but to think, and not even the gray cat, watching the shadow of her tail against the decaying brownstone of the doorstep, could have guessed the dark trend of those secret thoughts.

His life, his happiness had been ruined by a stranger who scorned even to think of him.

Other changes came in the life of Clarence.

Once he had been a great one for organizations. He had been vice president of the Mutual Benefit Association of the Superba Electrical Company and a member of no less than three lodges. In the days before his marriage the duties concerned with all these organizations had required much of his time, but when Ellen arrived he came to stay more and more at home, and little by little these gaieties too lost their place in his life. It seemed that he was content to remain in the flat reading the newspaper, working over his accounts and now and then merely listening to his wife's music with a strange expression of bewilderment as if it were impossible for him ever to understand her; and that little vein in his throat, which Lily had observed with such interest, throbbed and throbbed with a desire which sometimes must have terrified him.

Sitting there in the long evenings, silhouetted as she played, against the brilliant blue of a sky that stretched out interminably beyond the windows of the Babylon Arms, she had an air of lofty magnificence, an aloofness that was unconquerable. There were times when she seemed a very symbol of all that was unattainable; and always she was related to the wild dreams that became gradually less and less turbulent.

When she told him of these new engagements to play for Mrs. Callendar, he frowned and said, "But what of me? What am I to do?"

"It means more money for us . . . and we need money. You see, Mrs. Callendar pays me well. My music will cost me nothing. Perhaps I shall be able to put something aside. Besides there is the experience which must not be overlooked."

These things were true, and of late the mention of the money she might earn seemed not so unpleasant to Clarence as it had once been. He was, it appeared, more troubled by the fear of her

escaping him, for he said, "I don't think it's wise to go too much with these people. They're not our sort. . . . I've heard stories of how they live. They're society people."

At which Ellen mocked him, laughing, to say, "But I have nothing to do with them. I work for them. I entertain them . . . that's all."

"And Wyck says that young Callendar has a reputation for being a bad one."

Ellen laughed again, scornfully. "How does he know anything about young Callendar? Wyck and his boarding house. It's because he hates me. I know what he's like . . . a mean, nasty little man who hates me."

"He has friends. . . . His family was rich once in New York."

What Clarence said was true. Wyck did know because, although he had long since ceased to have any existence for such people as the Callendars, there were channels by way of housemaids and distant relatives through which news of their world penetrated at last, somewhat distorted and magnified, to the spinster aunts in Yonkers, and so at length to Mr. Wyck himself. For the old ladies had known young Callendar's father as a boy and they still lived in the world of those early days when, ensconced on lower Fifth Avenue behind plush curtains ornamented with ball fringe, they had received the Sunday procession of fashionables. The vulgar, new city of this early twentieth century, for all its noise and show, did not exist for them any more than they, for all their thin blooded pride, existed for the Callendars. It was after all an affair merely of dollars and cents. The Callendars had increased their fortune; the Wycks had lost theirs.

"I shall go to the Callendars' and play for them because it is necessary," said Ellen. "I am not a fool. I can take care of myself."

To this abrupt statement, Clarence found no answer. He yielded quietly and, presently, on the nights when Ellen played in the great house on Murray Hill, he found himself going back once more to his three lodges and the Mutual Benefit Association

of the Superba Electrical Company. There were members of the latter organization who thought it queer that their vice president attended the annual ball, held that year in a Brooklyn Hotel, as he had always done, alone, without his wife. It happened that she played that night in the solid house on Murray Hill.

And what then of Ellen herself? She was not, surely, unconscious of all that was happening so slowly, so imperceptibly about her. It is true that she was one of those who are born to success, one for whom the past does not exist and the present has reality only in so far as it provides a step into the future. Indeed, during those years in the city, even the Town itself became a very distant and shadowy memory. She was concerned, desperately, with what lay before her, confused perhaps by a sense of imminent disaster so vague that it could have for her no real meaning or significance.

But of course she never spoke of these things to her husband, perhaps because she was conscious that he might not understand them. At times the old pity for him, the same pity which had seized her so unaccountably upon the night of their flight, overwhelmed her, and at such moments it was her habit to be tender with him in a fashion that sent him into extravagant flights of happiness. But these moments became, after a while, conscious things on the part of Ellen so that presently she used them cheaply to quiet his unhappiness as one might use a gaudy stick of candy to quiet an unhappy child. Such little things made him happy.

Sometimes in the night she would lie in one of the green beds ornamented with garlands of salmon pink roses, listening to the sounds of the city that lay far beneath them . . . the distant rumble which rose and mingled somehow with the glow of light that filled all the dome of the sky, a rumble pierced sharply by the sudden shrill cry of a city child playing late in the streets, or the faint clop! clop! of hoofs upon asphalt blurred now and

again by the ghostly boom of a great ship's whistle rising from the fog-veiled river . . . marvelous, splendid sounds of a great world close at hand. There lay in these sounds a wonderful sense of the crowd—in which she herself was not a part. Lying there, her fingers would clutch the bedclothes tightly and presently she would become conscious that in her listening she was not alone, that beside her, separated by the little chasm which divided the two green beds, Clarence too lay awake . . . listening. She must have known in those hours an unreal consciousness of something that was waiting . . . a Thing destined not to become clear until long afterward . . . a Thing which waited silently and with a terrible patience. It was an experience that was not rare; it happened many nights, so that presently she came to be happy in the weeks when Clarence, traveling through the night hundreds of miles from her, was not there at all.

Sometimes her hand would steal out and in the darkness be touched and clasped by another hand that trembled and clung to hers in a sort of terror.

27

ELLEN'S awareness of Richard Callendar came over her slowly, a sensation neither desired nor anticipated, but one which stole upon her in some obscure fashion through the corridors of her own music. It would have been impossible to fix the moment at which this awareness took form; certainly it was not during that first damp drive through the park, when, wedged between his slim body and that of the yellow-clad Sabine, she had her first view of him. On that occasion she had remarked him merely as a young man perhaps of thirty (in this she was wrong by five years) who possessed a beauty of a kind new to her, a beauty of which there were traces to be found among certain of the workers in the Mills that hugged the dying hedges of Shane's Castle. It was, in short, a kind of mystical, unearthly

beauty born of an old, old race that was sensual and filled with an intense capacity for suffering . . . a kind of beauty never to be found among her own Scotch and English friends and relatives. It had its determining quality in the extraordinary blackness of his hair, the dark olive of his skin and the unreality of gray eyes so queerly placed in so much darkness.

Sabine Cane, so completely civilized, so disillusioned, understood this beauty with the mind of one capable of an amazing detachment and power of analysis, for she had an extraordinary power of pulling herself up short in the midst of her emotions and saying, "This is indeed interesting. Here am I giving way to a good wholesome passion. Well! Well! . . ." and then, "It's all very good so long as I don't allow myself to be hurt by it." For Sabine had the sort of intelligence which is the equipment of every potential sensualist.

This awareness on the part of Ellen forced its way through a torrent of impressions and emotions into a consciousness never too well organized. At the "parties" of Mrs. Callendar, there were, as the amusing woman predicted, never more than three or four people. There was always herself and usually her son. Sometimes Sabine Cane, whose relationship to the older woman was that of one who shares a complete understanding, was present, and now and then an elderly beau or two, of the sort which appears at concerts and the opera where they sit in the rear of boxes obscured somewhat by bedizened dowagers.

These entertainments, referred to variously by Thérèse Callendar as musicales, parties and soirées, were held in the vast drawing room where Ellen appeared on that first evening. While she played, the others, flanked by brocade curtains of immense dimensions, rows of Callendar family portraits and cases filled with bronze Buddhas and jade tear bottles, sat about respectful, listening, prepared to speak only in hushed voices, for it was true that all of them were wholly devoted to music . . . all perhaps, save Sabine who, it might be said, was present as much because she found Thérèse Callendar amusing and had a profound curiosity

regarding the shy, handsome girl who came to entertain them.

Ellen had a capacity for "feeling her audience." She had not played many times before she knew exactly the degree and quality of appreciation in each of those who listened. She came to know that Sabine neither understood music nor cared very greatly for it, and that Mrs. Callendar preferred the compositions which were a little wild and barbaric. In the dark young Richard Callendar there was a quality altogether different from any of the others. It was a kind of appreciation which she had experienced only twice before. Lily listened in that fashion and her own brother Fergus. It was as if they abandoned themselves completely to the sound, as if they became in all their senses quite immersed. For a long time after the music ceased it was difficult for them to return wholly to the world of reality. She herself knew the intoxication; it was an emotion quite beyond the realm of drunkenness; it might be perhaps comparable to the effect of certain drugs. Richard Callendar listened in that fashion, and understanding this she came at length to play for him alone, moved only by an instinct of profound gratitude.

Even Sabine Cane, with all her sharp intelligence, failed to understand what was happening before her green eyes. She knew, vaguely, that there were times when the girl outdid herself, when the sounds she made possessed a beauty unusual in degree and quality, but her penetration seldom progressed beyond this point, because, by virtue of that strange and mystical bond, the other two were raised into a world quite beyond her. If there was a difference it lay in this . . . that to Sabine one would have said that nothing could ever happen, because she guarded herself so carefully.

In the beginning, Ellen had come in only to play in the evenings at nine o'clock when the others had finished dinner and were sitting in the walnut-paneled library over cigarettes, coffee and liqueurs. She came, as a mountebank, to entertain. It was her habit to arrive quietly, to greet Mrs. Callendar and then sit modestly a little

apart from the others until the moment came for her to play. They were kind to her, and sometimes quite cordial—even Sabine who, out of an awkwardness born of a nature really shy, talked with her in the most confused and disjointed fashion, sometimes, under the stress of temptation, striving even to pry into the details of her life. Perhaps Sabine, in the recesses of her clear intelligence, speculated regarding the origins, the background, the very surroundings of Ellen. Her own life had been one ordered and held in check by a rigid tradition . . . a nurse, a day school kept by an affected and clever old harridan in impoverished circumstances, a year abroad and at last a coming-out ball. The independence she possessed lay altogether in her own thoughts, a thing hid away deeply. It moved like a mountain torrent confined placidly within the walls of a canal. It manifested itself only in a sharpness of tongue, a restless and malicious desire for gossip. She encouraged her imagination to rebuild the lives of her friends according to some pattern more exciting than that of the straight-laced world by which she was submerged. It was this, perhaps, which drew her to old Thérèse Callendar and her son. In them she found a freedom, a sophistication that elsewhere was lacking. Richard Callendar was not unwilling to discuss such things as mistresses. Thérèse did not treat her as if she were a spotless virgin to be protected against the realities of the world. They provided release to an intelligence bound in upon all sides by the corseted bejetted traditions of the day. They treated her with respect, as an individual. They possessed candor.

And so in the beginning her curiosity had seemed to Ellen, not understanding all this, an impudent thing, to be snubbed quietly in the proud way she had. She understood, well enough, that Sabine possessed the advantage . . . at least in the world of Mrs. Callendar's drawing-room. Sabine was at home there. She had lived always in such drawing-rooms. And yet there came a night when Sabine turned with her strange abruptness and said apropos of nothing, "I envy you."

At which Ellen smiled and asked, "Why?"

"Because," continued the abrupt Sabine, "you will always have the advantage over us (she was quite frank in admitting that they belonged to different worlds). It is always so with those who make their way by their wits."

Once Ellen might have pondered such a speech, wondering whether she should consider herself insulted by it. But in the experience of many talks with Sabine, she came to understand that there lay at the bottom of the observation no more than a complete honesty. Indeed, the remark was so honest that in the very moment it was made, Ellen saw not only its honesty but its truth. She *was* making her way by her wits. Sabine had nothing to make . . . nothing to expect save a marriage which would occur in due time according to the plan that controlled all Sabine's life. And the artist in Ellen leapt at once to assume the rôle. She would make her way by her wits, from now on, consciously. That placed her. It provided her with a certain definiteness of personality.

"People like that are always more sure of themselves," Sabine continued. "I've noticed it. Take Mrs. Sigourney. She's done it. She's outraged some people but she's got what she wanted. . . . She was nobody and now she's chic. It's her wits, always her wits. . . . She never does the wrong thing . . . never puts herself in a place where she can be hurt."

At the end of the speech, Sabine's voice dropped suddenly. There was even a little echo of something . . . perhaps a faint sigh, as if it came somewhere from deep within her. She *had* been hurt then, perhaps a long time ago. Perhaps her flawless clothes, her sharp and witty tongue, her air of entering a room, were all no more than an armor she had raised about herself. She was not, like Ellen, isolated, independent, free . . . belonging to nothing, to no one, save only herself. Her friendship with Richard Callendar may only have been a bit of bravado, to flaunt in the face of the others who desired him.

Ellen saw it, clearly now. In the Town she would have been like Sabine. There, in a community all her own, they could

have hurt her. Here in this world there was no one who could do her any injury. Alone, isolated, she was stronger than she had been in the very midst of all those who had known her since the beginning.

"I wish," continued Sabine, "that you would tell me about yourself some time. . . . Tell me and Richard. He's interested in such things."

"But I must play now," said Ellen.

On the same night when the hour came for Ellen to be sent home in Mrs. Callendar's cabriolet, the plump woman said, "The next time. . . . Let's see, it's Thursday, isn't it? . . . You must come for dinner. . . . I'll send Wilkes at twenty to eight."

28

THAT there was any such thing as kindness involved in all these complicated, new relationships had never occurred to Ellen, perhaps because she had never for a moment expected it. It was only with the invitation to dinner, in itself a tacit recognition of her individuality as something more than a mere music box, that the real state of affairs first became clear to her. It was as if she had progressed a step in the world, as if she had achieved a little already of the vast things she had set out to accomplish. She tried, in her direct, unsubtle way of speaking, to convey something of the idea to Clarence. She wanted him, as always, desperately to understand her actions. She wanted him, perhaps dishonestly, to believe that she could not help acting as she did, that it was not from choice but from a desire to brighten both their lives that she left him now and then to venture forth into regions which it was impossible for him to penetrate. And in her own fashion, as she had done so often with her mother, she told him the truth selectively, so that al-

though she did not lie she managed to achieve an effect that was not the truth.

The great thing which she neglected to admit was this . . . that she had come now to the point where it was no longer possible to take him with her. Even his fantastic dreams could not make him more than he was, and that was not enough. He had come to the end of his tether. She had barely begun. Imagine him in Mrs. Callendar's drawing-room! Fancy the abrupt Sabine Cane talking to him as she talked to Ellen! He, she knew, would suffer more than any one.

She said to him, "I'm sorry, but on Thursday I shall be out for dinner. . . . I've got to dine with Mrs. Callendar. . . . It's business, dear. . . . I must do these things."

And at the speech, Clarence assumed that hurt and crest-fallen look which touched her sense of pity. It was the one thing which could alter her determination; indeed there were times when she must have suspected that he used it consciously, as his only weapon. It moved her even now, so that she went so far as to kiss him and say, "It's just one night."

"But it's a beginning." He saw it perhaps, clearly enough, more clearly than she ever imagined. "I wish you wouldn't."

And then she explained to him again the things which it was necessary for her to do in order to win what she must have. She talked long and eloquently, for she was earnest and she pitied him. It was clear that her dishonesty arose not so much out of any evil calculation as out of a desire to have everything, to go her way and still leave Clarence unharmed and happy. It was a thing impossible, of course, yet it never seemed so to her. There was in her so much of her indomitable mother that she was never able to believe in the impossible.

So she talked eloquently and at length she even arranged it for him that he should dine on Thursday night with Mr. and Mrs. Bunce. Thus, by a single act, she accomplished another thing. She dined with the Bunces without having to dine with them.

She knew too that they would be happier with Clarence there alone. It would be like the old days, without strain, an evening when the three of them,—Clarence and Harry Bunce and his rosy wife,—could dine, as one might say, in peace. There would be no strain, no sense of an intruder in their midst. For she was a stranger, always; they were never quite at ease with her.

Thus Clarence found the evening arranged, and he was content in his way, for he liked the Bunces.

Afterward Ellen's clearest memory of the evening was the voice of Sabine drifting from the drawing-room as she entered the hall, saying, "The trouble with Boston people is that they are all descended from middle class immigrants and they've been proud of it ever since."

This speech became fixed somehow in her brain as a symbol of Sabine's queer worldliness, of a strangely cynical honesty that would color her whole point of view up to the very end. If Sabine thought it idiotic to take pride in being middle class, if she thought it absurd not to strive after distinction, she would say it, whether or not people thought her a snob. The world to her was thus and so; it moved according to an ancient pattern. All the orations in the world upon the subject of democracy could not alter the rule of things. Besides, it was a good enough rule. Why pretend it wasn't? Sabine, of course, could afford to take such a position. In a worldly sense, she had nothing to strive for. She had been born to those things.

Ellen, removing the squirrel coat Clarence had given her, turned these considerations over in her mind as she entered the room. She was watching them all to-night as she had watched them once before through the crack in the lacquered screen, cautiously, with an air of an enemy laying siege to their fortress.

There was, beneath the gaze of the Callendar ancestors, only Mrs. Callendar in a dress of jet and sequins, Sabine in a brilliant green gown and Richard Callendar, handsome and dark in his black and white clothes. Richard rose and came forward to meet her.

"Mama," he said, smiling, "has just been talking of you. She believes that one day you will be a great personality."

"We are dining alone, the four of us," said Mrs. Callendar abruptly. It was clear that she meant to keep Ellen forever in ignorance of what she had said.

The dining room was done in the grand manner of the Second Empire, a room copied at the behest of young Callendar's grandfather from a house built by the Duc de Morny for one of his mistresses. It was grandiose, with columns of white and gilt, centering upon a massive table and a group of chairs with backs which ended a foot or two sooner than they should have ended. On the four panels of the walls there hung pictures of Venice in the dry, hard manner of Canaletto . . . Venice at Dawn, Venice at Sunset, Venice at Carnival Time and Venice in Mourning for the Pope. On the huge table stood a silver *épergne* filled to overflowing with the most opulent of fruits . . . mangoes, persimmons, red bananas, Homberg grapes and pomegranates. It was as if Thérèse Callendar had built this monument of fruit to recapture something of her own Oriental background—the rest of the room was so bad, so filled with the shadows of Cockney *demi-mondaines* and snuffbox adventures out of the Second Empire. At the four corners of the vast *épergne* stood four huge candelabra of silver.

Despite the air of depression given out by the monstrous room, it possessed a somber magnificence. To Ellen, the only magnificence approaching it lay in the drawing-room of that gloomy house known as Shane's Castle, set in the midst of the smoking furnaces. Aunt Julia's house was like it, filled with pictures and furniture and carpets which, like these, had been brought out of Europe.

There were wines for dinner, not one or two, but an array of port, madeira, *sauterne*, sherry and, at the place where Mrs. Callendar seated herself in a chair raised more than the others so that she might dominate the massive table, a *vinet* of champagne for

herself in a tiny silver bucket filled with ice. It was a school-girl's dream of magnificence . . . something out of the pages of a super-romantic novelette. In the beginning, the spectacle, proceeding through course after course, dazzled Ellen and made her shy. It was superb food, for in the veins of Thérèse there blended the blood of Frenchman and Greek. It was food that had a taste . . . not the boiled stuff of Anglo-Saxons.

After dinner, when they had all gone into the dark library, the moment came at last when Ellen's tongue was loosed. It may have been the wine she drank or it may have been the cigarette which, in her new freedom, she smoked over the coffee (for in a single evening she had broken two of Clarence's rules); but it is more likely that it was the picture hanging over the mantelpiece, which changed everything.

She looked at it carefully and then said, "Is that by Turner? My aunt has one by him."

And a moment later, under the subtle urgency of Sabine, she was telling them everything. She described, for example, the Town, its Mills, its desolation, the misery of the workers. She painted for them a picture of her own family, of the Red Scot who lay now, helpless and childish, in her own big bed. She told them of her other grandfather, cold and aloof, who had run away in his youth and lived in the Paris of the Second Empire, and now existed in a room walled in by books. She recreated before their eyes the gloomy color of Shane's Castle, only to be interrupted in the midst by Thérèse Callendar, who turned to Sabine and observed, "She is a cousin, you know, of the Madame Shane we saw once at Madame de Cyon's in Paris. . . . You remember Madame de Cyon, the Russian woman, whose husband was French minister to Bulgaria. . . . She lived in the Avenue du Bois. A Bonapartist. Madame Shane was the beauty with red hair. . . . Miss Tolliver's Aunt Julia is her mother."

And then she permitted Ellen to continue, and the girl meanwhile, even as she talked, understood that Mrs. Callendar had not

forgotten Lily. She had even fixed the place and time of their meeting. It was clear that she had been thinking of Lily, as every one did.

She told the story simply enough, but with an earnestness that was moving. To her the canvas which she painted was not remarkable, but to the listeners it appeared to hold, perhaps because it was so new to them, the fascination of a world which was utterly strange and a little exotic. They listened, moved by the simplicity of her utterance, and Richard Callendar asked her questions about the mills and furnaces, about the foreign population. The recital was a success and out of it she learned something new,—that there was nothing of such power as simplicity, nothing of such interest as individuality. She understood all that from the way in which they listened. It was the first time in all her life when she had thrown caution to the winds. She was, for an hour, her complete self.

But there was one part of the story which she did not tell. It was that part which concerned her elopement and all that had followed it. She said simply, "And so I came to New York to study, and luckily fell into the hands of Sanson. . . ."

Richard Callendar stood up suddenly and poked the fire. His mother said, "You could not have done better," and Sabine observed, "Here in New York we forget that the rest of the country exists. . . . I've never been out of New York except to go to Europe or to some summer place."

To-night, instead of being a performer, one who played in public, she was the guest, the center of the evening.

She played for them the Moonlight Sonata and while she played, she became conscious again of the curious, breathless way in which Richard Callendar listened. It seemed, for a time, that he existed only in a single spirit which somehow enveloped her and the music of Beethoven. All the evening he had been silent and watchful, as silent and as watchful as herself, save in the moment when she was carried away by her own story. When she had finished play-

ing she was conscious of another fact, perhaps even more interesting. It was that Sabine had noticed a difference and was regarding the handsome Callendar with a look so intent that Ellen, turning sharply, caught her unaware.

This new world was a world of shadows, of hints, of insinuations, a world of curious restraints and disguises. Out of these, in the very instant she turned from the piano, she understood that the relation between Sabine and young Callendar was more than a casual friendship. Sabine was in love with him, passionately, perhaps without even knowing it, for it must have required a terrible force to lead a woman so circumspect into such a betrayal.

That night, for a second time, Ellen left the house in company with Sabine and Richard Callendar. It came about that, as they were preparing to leave, young Callendar proposed to accompany them and without further discussion entered the carriage. In the past it had been the custom to send Ellen home in the cabriolet while Callendar followed in the brougham with Sabine. Sometimes these two walked to Sabine's house. She lived in Park Avenue, a half dozen blocks away, in a tall narrow house, exceedingly stiff and formal in appearance . . . a house which one could not but say suited her admirably.

On the way, they talked music for a time and when the cabriolet approached Sabine's corner, she said simply, "I am tired. You can drop me at home."

So she bade them good night without further ado and disappeared into the narrow house. It was a strange thing for her to have done. Ellen and Callendar must have expected her to accompany them all the way to the Babylon Arms and to return alone with him; that would have been the order of things. But she was more subtle than they imagined. If she understood, as Ellen was certain she had, that there was some new thing come into the relations that existed among them all, she was clever. She did not attempt to change or even interrupt this new current; wise in the depths of her shrewd mind she saw that to be an obstacle was

not the same as to be a goal. So she left Richard Callendar with the stranger who had become her rival. It may have caused her sleeplessness and torment; she may have felt a keen jealousy, but it was impossible to know. It may also have been that, knowing the continental ideas of Callendar, she was not concerned over her ultimate victory. By the rule of the very tradition which had shut her in, Callendar could not *marry* this stranger.

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AS Callendar reëntered the cabriolet, Ellen settled back into her corner to wait. She watched, as always, but this time she was conscious that there was another who was watching. It seemed for the first time that there had risen up in her path a person, perhaps even an enemy, who played the same waiting game. Callendar sat in his corner, his dark face visible now and then as a streak of light from the lamps entered the door, and in that uncertain and shifting illumination, Ellen studied him closely for the first time.

It was a strangely pleasing face; the very dark pallor, so evenly distributed, so perfectly shaded caught her attention as a kind of beauty new to her. There was no ruddiness here, no boisterous energy. Rather it was a silent, subtle kind of beauty. The power behind it was not so much a crude energy as a strength that was placid yet possessed of the quality of steel. It was a strength that revealed itself in the firm, clean line of the jaw and in the square, almost hard modeling of the intelligent head. If there was a hint of passion it lay in the red lips that were so full and sensual beneath the fine black mustache. He wore the collar of his coat turned up a little, with his hat pulled well over his eyes so that the whole gave an impression of rakishness and adventure. Yet her instinct told her that here was something to be feared, something subtle and rather neat, of a sort strange to her.

They must have ridden several blocks in silence when he said

to her, in a voice that was warm and carried faint traces of an accent, "I say, you are a remarkable person. I'd never dreamed how much it took to bring you where you are."

When she answered, Ellen felt a new and absurd inclination to become a helpless, almost arch, young girl. "It's nothing," she said. "I'd never thought about it."

"It was an entertaining story you gave us. . . . You see people like me and Sabine seldom get any idea of what the real world is like." He paused for a moment and then continued as if to make clear what he meant—"I mean a world in which people have to fight for things. We just have them. We forget about the others. And we're in the minority of about . . . shall we say . . . one to a thousand. I've always had what I wanted. . . . I suppose I'll always have it."

This was strange talk, in a queer philosophic vein, to which Ellen answered again, "I don't know . . . I've never thought about the difference. I know what I want and some day . . . I suppose I'll have it."

"You *are* an extraordinary musician . . . you know," he continued. "I wonder if you know how extraordinary."

Ellen did know; she was sure of it. But she saw fit not to answer because she was a little puzzled. In a world bounded by Clarence and Herman Biggs, she had not met a man of this sort. He was younger than Clarence and not much older than Herman but that made no difference. It was something that had nothing to do with age. Rather it was a matter of experience. She knew she was an excellent musician; she must have believed it or she could not have gone her own way with such unswerving directness, but she chose to answer modestly. In the dim light of the cab, it was impossible to know whether or not she actually smirked.

"Perhaps I am. How is one to know? . . . About one's self, I mean."

"My mother and I know about such things," he replied, and then for a time the cabriolet fell into silence. They turned from

the avenue into the park, and presently out of his corner he spoke again.

"You're sure you told us everything to-night? You didn't leave out of the story anything that might interest us?"

There was in this an impertinence which Ellen sensed and considered for a time. He was looking out of the window at the bare trees of the park with a splendid air of indifference, which Ellen felt was not indifference at all. Far back in her consciousness an odd feeling of triumph came into existence, a queer, inexplicable feeling that she was the dominant one, that somehow she had caught him now off his guard, as if she found he was not so clever as he thought. She became aware of a genuine sense of conflict, vague and undefined, . . . a sort of conflict between her own intelligence and one that was quite as powerful. She watched the clear-cut ivory profile for a time and then said, "No, I left out nothing that could possibly interest anybody but me."

(That much for his curiosity about the little man he saw for an instant through the open door at the Babylon Arms!)

Callendar turned to her. "I sound impertinent, but I only ask because it seems to me that you are even more interesting than the story you tell."

Again this was bold and even personal, as though he sought to assume possession of that part of her which should belong to no one . . . the part which was *herself*, at which he had no right to pry. The temptation to become feminine seized her once more.

"I suppose," she said, "that that is a compliment. I thank you for it. Of course, I don't know how true it is."

"It *is* true," he replied abruptly. "You are admirable . . . and courageous. Spirit is a fine thing . . . the greatest in the world."

There was one thing for which she was thankful. He did not treat her as if she were a silly girl, as a man might, for example,

have treated May Seton. In years he was not much older than herself yet in reality she understood that he was centuries older. Of that, she was certain. What she did not understand was that his approach to life, down to the veriest detail, was one which, by the nature of things, was not only alien but incomprehensible. He had patience, a quality which in her was so utterly lacking as to be inconceivable; he could wait. It was this which puzzled her . . . this and the sense of conflict, so complicated, that was always a little way off, just out of reach and not to be understood.

From a great distance, she watched him and even herself, confused, puzzled, but profoundly interested. That much she had gained from the blood that flowed in old Gramp Tolliver's veins. She was always watching, waiting, learning.

The rest of their conversation was less interesting. It possessed, to be sure, a strange quality of leisure; there were long silences not in the least awkward and uncomfortable. On the contrary, despite that sense of conflict and watching, there was a certain calmness about them, as of the silences which fall between old friends immersed in a perfect understanding. It was perhaps the same friendliness which she neglected always to take into consideration, in which she would never quite believe.

At the Babylon Arms they passed between the Syrian Lions of cast iron and at the elevator he left her. There was no prying this time, no evidence of curiosity. As he bade her good night, he suggested that one day they might lunch together. Then the swaying elevator bore her upward to Clarence and out of sight of Callendar.

The sense of conflict disturbed her, even after Clarence came in from the Bunces', murmuring apologies for having forgotten her and stayed so late. He apologized too for having, in the enthusiasm of a pinochle game, invited the Bunces to dinner four weeks later when he had returned from his western trip.

MRS. CALLENDAR stayed two months longer than usual in New York. She was kept by the only things which could have kept her away from the sunshine of her adored Cannes; that is to say, difficulties over stocks and bonds, adjustments of the Callendar fortune. She saw to it that there were no slips and no losses. Indeed, by missing the season at Cannes she turned a profit of several hundred thousand dollars which might have been lost in the hands of one in whose veins there flowed less Levantine blood.

Richard, of course, remained with her, though he exhibited a curious indifference toward the affairs which made upon his mother claims so passionate. When she reproached him, as she frequently did, he turned to her sometimes in the dark library of the house on Murray Hill and said, "My God! I'm too rich now. What should I do with any more money? Why should I worry?"

It was an attitude in which there was nothing of softness, nothing of degeneracy; it was not even the case of a son pampered by riches. His mother must have known that, better than any one, because she had encountered in him a will not unlike her own . . . a will troubled in his case by a strange restlessness born perhaps of the bizarre mixture of blood. If he was possessed of any passions they were for women, and for music, which had an effect that was amazing; it was the one thing which held the power of quieting him. There were times when he would sit motionless in the presence of music as if enchanted by it. Its effect upon him was primitive and barbaric like the hypnotism which a tom-tom exerts upon a savage.

There came a night when, as they sat alone over their coffee, estranged and a little silent after her reproaches, she turned to him and without warning said, "What about this *jeune prodige* . . . Miss Tolliver. I hear you've been lunching with her."

At this direct sally, a smile appeared slowly on the dark face

of the son. It began gently at first on the sensual red lips, and then spread itself until the effect was utterly disarming. He had a way of smiling thus, after a fashion that was disconcerting because its implications were so profound, so subtle, and so filled with disillusionment. It was a smile in which the gray eyes, lighting suddenly, played a tantalizing rôle—a smile which seemed to envelop its subject and, clinging there for a time, to destroy all power of deceit by its very friendliness. It said, gently and warmly, "Come now, let's be honest and generous with each other." The red lips curved ever so gently beneath the dark mustache. It was the smile of a man born knowing much that others seldom ever learn.

He smiled at her and said, "Ah! Who could have told you that? . . . Who but Sabine . . . who knows everything?"

The very tone of his voice appeared to caress and yet mock his mother. (Sabine . . . indeed all women.) Before such an assault even Thérèse Callendar had no resistance. Shifting her plump body so that the heavy bangles on her wrists jangled and clattered, she waited a moment before answering. Then a faint blush, which appeared to arise from a real sense of guilt, spread slowly up to the edges of her bright small eyes.

"It *was* Sabine who told me," she said. "You can't blame her for that."

"No . . . she always knows everything." He laughed abruptly. "Sometimes I think she must be in communication with the birds . . . or the mice."

"You know what I think . . . I think that it's time you married. It's a responsibility . . . the money. . . . There ought to be heirs. We can't give all that money to charity or some drafty museum." While she knocked off the ashes from her cigarette, he watched her silently with the same caressing, mocking smile. "You're past twenty-five, you know. . . . I want my grandchildren to be the children of young parents. I believe in it."

Then suddenly, he pierced straight into the thing which she

had avoided mentioning. "I shan't marry Sabine," he said. "I'll find some one. I haven't found her yet."

"Sabine is excellent. She is well brought up. . . . She is rich. She is one of the few American women we know who is *mondaine*. I want you to marry an American. We need new blood. She knows her way about. She dresses superbly. . . . She will make an excellent hostess. She will be at home everywhere."

"But I am not in love with her," he said smiling.

For an instant a glint of hard anger appeared in her eyes. "You are old enough . . . or at least wise enough not to be romantic."

"It is not a question of romance, Mama. . . . It is more a question of necessity. I should prefer to be faithful to my wife."

At this speech, she clucked her tongue, and crushed out the end of her cigarette. "*Ça ne marche pas*," she observed coldly. "You can't expect me to believe such nonsense."

Thérèse was by no means innocent. She had lived in the world, always. She knew what things went on about her and, being Levantine and French, she expected even less than most women of experience. She understood that there were such things as mistresses and that most men of her world were not unacquainted with them; so she could not for a moment have supposed that her son, smiling at her in his knowing fashion, possessed a purity that was virginal. Indeed, it might be said that she knew more of his adventures than he ever supposed. Once she had scandalized Mrs. Champion by saying, "My son has an intrigue with the wife of one of my best friends in Paris. It puts me in a most uncomfortable position."

Nevertheless she had said this in a tone that implied satisfaction; the mistress of her son was, at least, a lady and not a woman of the streets. There was only one thing (she was accustomed to say) that she regarded as unforgivable; it was that he should make a fool of himself or waste great sums of money on any woman. And this, she must have known, was extremely unlikely.

After their disagreement they sat for a time in the sort of strained silence that envelops a conflict between two people of extraordinary will. It was Thérèse who, with a sudden embarrassed cough, interrupted the stillness.

"This girl . . ." she said. "I hope you're not entangling yourself with her."

Again he smiled and replied, "No, I haven't entangled myself."

"Because, it is dangerous with a girl of that sort. . . . She's an American, you know, and not the sort one finds among musicians in Paris. . . . *Autres choses*. . . . She's well brought up . . . *bourgeoisie*, I should say, of the provinces."

This time Richard laughed. "Not so *bourgeoise* as you might think."

She leaned forward a little. "That's just it!" she said. "She's not easy to win. . . . She's not the ordinary sort. She's a woman of character . . . of will." Then she moved back, folding the chubby hands, glittering with rings, on the brief expanse of her black satin lap. "No, you'd best keep clear of her. . . . Whatever happens is without my approval."

"She is interesting," the son replied. "I've never seen a woman quite like her."

This, it appeared, was the cause for new alarm. After regarding him for a time curiously, she murmured, "You can't marry her, of course. She's too inexperienced. . . . Sometimes, she's *gauche*. But that's not the chief thing. . . . If you married her, I don't think I should object . . . not very greatly. . . . It's new blood . . . healthy blood. But I advise you against thinking of such a thing. Wherever she goes, trouble will follow. She's born, like most people with a touch of genius, under a curse." He would have interrupted her here, but she checked him with a gesture of her fat hand. "She is certain to affect the lives of every one about her . . . because, well, because the threads of our lives are hopelessly tangled. Oh, don't think I'm talking nonsense or saying this to discourage you. . . . I know it. . . . I'm sure of it. . . . Marry her if you will, but don't ex-

pect happiness to come of it. She would doubtless bear you a son . . . a fine strong son because she is a fine cold animal. But don't expect any satisfaction from her. She knows too well exactly where she is bound."

During this long speech the son stood smoking silently with a shadow of the mocking smile on his lips. When she had finished he did not answer her but sat, with a thoughtful air, looking out into the garden which Thérèse this year had not bothered to have planted.

After a time she spoke again to say, "Surely you don't fancy you could ever control her. . . . She's a wild young filly. . . . No man will ever control her . . . not for long."

"I've never thought of marrying her," he replied quietly. "Why, she has a lover already."

At this Mrs. Callendar's countenance assumed an expression of passionate interest. "But she is not that sort . . . not a *demi-mondaine*. She is an honest woman . . . a cold woman. One can see that."

He smiled, this time even more softly and mockingly and into the gray eyes there came a gleam of ironical humor. "It was Sabine who said she had a lover," he said. "You remember, Miss Tolliver told us nothing of what has happened to her since she came here. . . . Besides, cold women are the most successful. They do not lose their heads."

IF Ellen had ever had any use for such a creature as a confidante, she would have told her no doubt that life, at this moment, was an exasperating puzzle. Between the manners of Herman Biggs and Clarence and the manners of such a man as Richard Callendar, there lay a vast gulf, a sort of blank page in the book of her experience, an hiatus that left her uneasy and disturbed.

Clarence and Herman Biggs, she understood, represented to a great degree the husband and lover of her own country. They were the ones who came seeking, the ones who idolized the object of their affections. They were, if not fascinating, affectionate and docile. They were perhaps, even convenient, so long as they did not get under foot. There was in them a certain childlike innocence, complicated alone by a Quixotic code of chivalry and honor which allowed them to be despoiled. Either they overlooked or were innocent of the ways of the world and so clung to the sentimental image of women as pure, devoted creatures who were always good and generous. There were, of course, such things as "bad women" but these did not concern them; such women were of a class apart, without any real relation to good women, a third sex one might have said, with its own uses. The women of their world had changed abruptly, swiftly, in a generation or two, from helpmates on a rude frontier adventure into creatures of luxury; and men like Herman and Clarence had not kept pace. These were the men whom Ellen had always known. There had never been any one like Richard Callendar.

In the absence of Clarence among the factories of the middle west Ellen lunched, not once, but several times with Callendar. Out of the money she had earned by her playing she was able now to dress herself in a fashion which, if not smart, was at least simple and charming. With the approach of the warm days, they lunched at Sherry's (for he made no effort to conceal his attentions) in an open window which gave out upon the Avenue and the stream of carriages, disordered now by increasing inroads of noisy automobiles. She must have understood, out of the depths of her mother's teachings, that what she did was an improper and even a dangerous thing. It was, at least, a misstep, taken through lack of experience . . . a step which later on she might not have risked.

There was Callendar himself to be considered. It was clear that, despite all her coolness, he had an effect upon her. There were times when she would blush as if suddenly overcome by a

sense of his presence, for he was charming to her—gentle, understanding, full of a fire which leapt up in sudden gusts to join the flame of her own triumph and zest in living. In the window overlooking Fifth Avenue there were moments when she must have forgotten everything save the future, hours when they talked of Europe, when he described to her with something very close to passion the brilliance of Paris or the smoky glow of London. Both were naïve, Ellen in the fashion of the inexperienced and Callendar, so dark, so charming, so utterly new, in the fashion of a man whose directness of action had nothing to do with the question of conventions. It was impossible for either to have understood the emotion that drew them together, for it was a romantic thing to which both were then insensible, the one because life had taught her not to expect such a thing as romance, the other because he had never believed in its existence.

One bright afternoon in May they walked all the way from Sherry's through the park to the Babylon Arms. It was a soft day when the park appeared veritably to reflect its greenness upon the air itself, a day when the willows were softened by a haze of new leaves, and the rare clusters of cherry trees appeared in faint blurs of delicate pink. Along the edges of the lake, freed now of its burden of ice and not yet burdened anew with the old newspapers of sweltering August, the nursemaids divided the iron benches with vagabonds and old ladies who had come there simply to rest, to sit relaxed, silent, as if they were sustained somehow without effort by the very softness of the air. The quality of this pervading gentleness appeared to have its effect upon the two; for a time they were enveloped by a languor which drugged the intelligence and warmed the senses. They walked lazily, side by side, Ellen in a tight gray suit and a large picture hat, Callendar looking at her now and then out of his gray eyes and poking the fresh green grass with his malacca stick. At times they stopped and laughed, for Callendar was in a charming mood when he became a *blagueur*, irresistible and caressing. Under the influence of the day even the hardness of Ellen, which could be at

times almost pitiful, appeared to melt away. She laughed at him. She even watched him slyly from the corner of her eyes, but not in the old hostile fashion. It was more the way one would watch a charming little boy, fearful lest his knowledge of the admiration might give him an advantage.

It could not have been the weather alone which so changed her. There were other things, among them beyond all doubt Callendar himself and the friendship which he had given her, the same friendship which his mother and even Sabine in her brusque, shy way had offered. They were friends in a way no one, save Lily, had ever been before. It is possible that there came to her on this soft warm day a knowledge of her kinship with these people, of a bond which if undefinable was none the less certain and secure. They had nothing to gain from her and they were not concerned with subduing her; they did not seek to change her in any way at all. They were like her old Aunt Julia and the mysterious Lily, who had warned her not to let people make her fit a pattern, not to let them drag her down to the level of their own mediocrity; she understood now what Lily meant. These were people who, by some quality of honesty that was almost a physical thing, had attained an aristocracy of their own, a state which had its foundations in that very honesty. There was, too, a distinction about them of a sort beyond such individuals as the genteel, decayed Mr. Wyck, May Seton and her giggles, Mr. Bunce who was so robust and kind, and (this thought must have occurred to her) even Clarence whose kindly humbleness barred him forever. They were not muddled; they stood outlined, for all their strangeness, with a sharp clarity.

It was an understanding that had come to her over a long time dimly as through a mist. To-day she knew it. She began to understand why there were some people whom she admired and some for whom she could have in her heart contempt or at best an emptiness that bordered upon pity.

So she walked very happily with the fascinating, dark young man, content perhaps that she might go on thus forever, that she

might always have him and Sabine and Thérèse quite as they were, without any change. And in the depths of her heart it would have given her a sharp, leaping pleasure to have encountered suddenly on one of those asphalt paths May Seton and others of her townspeople. It would have pleased her to have had them witness her triumph. For she had not yet escaped the Town.

Into the midst of this a new knowledge came, sharp and unforeseen.

Under the shadow of Daniel Webster in the bronze attitude of a pouter pigeon, Callendar halted sharply and turned toward her with a swift directness, looking at her so closely that for an instant she blushed.

"Might I come in with you this afternoon?" he asked. "Will you be alone?"

Faced by the disarming gaze of the gray eyes, she forgot for a moment her game of watching. She answered, "Why, yes. I'll be alone." And then, as if she could not control herself, she looked away and started walking once more.

He did not speak again until they had reached the outer barrier of the park when he said,

"I'd like to have you play for me . . . alone. I've never heard you save in a crowd. I fancy you would play best for an audience of one."

They turned presently between the Syrian Lions of the Babylon Arms and, after being borne silently aloft in the swaying elevator, they climbed the two flights of stairs to the door of the tiny apartment which Ellen opened with her key. The room was in darkness until she lifted the shades which (on the advice of that passionate housekeeper, her mother) were drawn to protect the cheap, bright carpet from the sharp rays of the spring sun, and then the light revealed a shabby little room stuffed with the things which Clarence had bought her. There were chairs and sofas and pillows, pictures, ornaments and little tables. In one corner the grand piano stood somewhat apart in a little bay cleared of

furniture. Richard, leaning on his stick and viewing the confusion gravely, must have thought her lover a poor sort, who could offer her only a great profusion of things in the poorest of taste. Yet he did not smile, perhaps because he was not greatly interested in the room. In the midst of all the stuff, Ellen, taking off her picture hat and blushing still with a hazy sense of confusion, possessed an air of aloofness, of being detached from all the shabby things. She rose above them as once before she had risen above the furniture in the Setons' dismal parlor.

The gaiety that had flourished in the bright park became dampened now by a queer sense of strain, an awkwardness which made itself apparent in the silence of both. They were no longer in the bright open park: the walls which shut them in had changed everything, sharpened in some indefinable way the power of their senses. For an instant they stood regarding each other shyly, and presently Ellen said, "Do sit down there. . . . And I'll play for you. What do you want to hear?"

Richard told her that the choice must be hers, and then he seated himself in Clarence's leather arm chair and lighted a cigarette with the matches from Clarence's smoking table in the Mission style. Without speaking again she began to play. It was as if she had said, "I will talk to you in this fashion," and after the first few chords had fallen the sense of strain and conflict disappeared, swallowed up again, this time in the man's attitude of passionate listening.

She played for him, first of all, some Schumann which was so like the shadowy, soft consciousness of this new feeling born with such abruptness there in the park; and then she played some of his beloved Chopin and turned at last into the Sonata Appassionata. She played as she played only for Fergus who listened in the same fashion, slumped down in his chair, his eyes half closed, his curling, golden hair all rumpled, with the air of one intoxicated by sound. It must have occurred to her, for the first time, that there was between her brother and this stranger a certain likeness, a capacity for wild abandonment that was terrifying. To-day

all the things which for so long a time had been shut up within the walls of her bitter secrecy poured forth and overflowed into the music; and with this there was united a new fire, a sudden warmth that was strange to her. She knew a strange desire to share all that she possessed, a curious, aching desire close to the border of tears. It was so, perhaps, because love would always be to her like this . . . a wild and passionate heightening of the senses which found its manifestation in an unearthly unity of spirit. For a time she carried Richard with her into the ecstasy she was able to invoke.

And when at length the last chords drifted slowly away, they permitted the silence to remain unbroken for a long time while he sat, still slumped in his chair, his eyes half closed, watching her with the air of one on whom a spell has been cast.

He sat there in Clarence's chair in Clarence's place, magnificent like herself in all that desert of commonplace things. There was a sense of unreality about the whole scene. She must have known, deep within that hard intelligence of hers, that what she saw was at best an illusion since between them both there lay differences, circumstances, facts that were not to be overcome.

He went presently, after they had exchanged a few stupid phrases drawn by sheer force from the depths of an emotion which neither was willing to betray save by their silence. They did not even speak of another meeting; nothing happened; upon the surface their parting was strangely empty and bare. And when the door had closed behind him, Richard halted for a moment in the dark hallway and leaned against the wall. Perhaps he remembered what his mother, so old in her wisdom and so shrewd, had told him. *She's not the ordinary sort. . . . You'd best keep clear of her.*

The mocking look had gone out of his eyes. Something had happened to him, an experience that was altogether new in a life by no means limited in such matters . . . a thing which opened the fancy to a new magnificence, a new rapture, a new intoxication. It was a vision which he may have doubted because he had

never believed in its existence. But between him and this wild adventure there stood a barrier against which he could make no progress. It was an invisible wall of a sort he had never encountered in any woman, not even in the terrible serenity of Sabine. Hard it was, and clear like crystal, protecting something which he might see but never touch. *She's not the ordinary sort. . . . You'd best keep clear of her.*

On the opposite side of the door Ellen flung herself down on the ugly divan and wept, silently and horribly, as she had wept once before in the dark solitude of her own virginal room, while the autumn rain drenched the garden outside. And again she could not have told why she wept. It was a passionate sensuous weeping which exhausted itself presently and left her weary and quiet until long after the lights had begun to twinkle through the smoke along the river.

Yet nothing had happened—nothing at all of which she could say, “It is this or that.”

32

MEANWHILE from the Town there came to Ellen in the weekly letters of her mother bits of news which sometimes interested her but more often did not. There was the news of May Seton's marriage to Herman Biggs, an evening wedding in the Methodist church with a supper afterwards at which Skinflint Seton, in a gesture of triumph and vindication, had flung loose the purse strings and gone so far as to provide an orchestra which played behind a screen of smilax and carnations.

“Herman,” wrote Hattie Tolliver, “looked a gawk, with his freckles, and May was too fat for her dress. It was cut princess fashion and trimmed with duchess lace. She carried a shower bouquet of white roses and sweet peas. Herman's trousers

bagged at the knees. At least this is what Cousin Eva Barr, who went to the wedding, told me. I wasn't invited. They say that the Setons have been living on cold hash ever since.

"They went to French Lick Springs on their honeymoon and now Herman is back at the factory learning the corset business."

Miss Ogilvie had not been well lately and Aunt Julia was becoming more and more eccentric. She had shut up all but one great room at Shane's Castle and would see no one but the Doctor and Hattie Tolliver. "I go to see her three times a week. She needs some one to take hold of that great house. There's no one else, so I do it. Miss Ogilvie comes in to sit with Pa while I'm gone. She's given up some of her pupils. She says she finds she can't do as much as she once could.

"Your father is doing well at the bank and I've managed to lay aside quite a sum after the debts were paid. We'll need it to send Fergus to school. I've sold the rings that Aunt Julia gave me and we're now on the prosperous side of things once more. If your father had only listened to me, we'd have been rich to-day, but he always said he knew best, and he trusted people too much. Before long we'll have enough to come East. I want to be with my children."

Then there were inquiries after her health and Clarence's welfare and endless cautions and advice concerning the management of the flat, for distance made little difference to Hattie Tolliver when it concerned the interests of some one she loved. It was as if she ran Ellen's household as well. In one letter she was even bold enough to ask whether there was any hope of her becoming a grandmother.

Each of these letters, though it bore a great similarity to all the others, was in a sense an epic. They recorded in sentences vigorously written and crowded with a host of details, the daily history of a community. They were fiercely personal and colored by the prejudices of Hattie Tolliver. In her enemies there was nothing good and in those she loved best nothing bad. Her world

was one of a savage intensity, painted like Skinflint Seton's entirely in blacks and whites.

She inquired frequently whether Clarence would be coming West, insisting that he must stop and see them in the Town and tell them all the news. And the credulous woman was put off with the story that Clarence had given up traveling and would not be in the West again for a long time. It was a lie that Ellen invented to protect him, since he was too timid ever to risk meeting any one who might recognize him as spiritual ravisher of Mrs. Herman Biggs (née May Seton).

And at length there came a letter containing the news that Grandpa Barr had died.

"He passed away," wrote Mrs. Tolliver, "quietly. I was in the room and he was just lying there looking at the ceiling and singing an old song that he used to sing when Ma was still alive and I was a little girl. They used to sing it as a duet. 'I will find my rest in the eagle's nest,' it was called, and they sang it in the long summer evenings when all the chores were done and they sat out under the trees. I can remember it well. He was humming this when suddenly he tried to sit up, and said, 'Why, Ma. . . . There you are, come to meet me. . . . I'm coming to you. . . . In just a minute, as soon as I get the little red cow in from the field by the cairn.' And then he lay back and died without another word. (It was indeed a long way from Grandpa Barr, dead now, with his memories of the frontier, to Thérèse Callendar and her carved emerald saved from the sack of Constantinople.)

"It was a good thing because he wanted to die for so long. It was hard on a man like that who had always been so active. He was like a little child. For a long time he hadn't said anything sensible. I did everything for him and I don't regret it. It was hard sometimes with so much else to worry me and take up my time.

"Aunt Julia is getting worse and worse. She can't leave her bed now and can only eat things without sugar. I make her

cakes every week and custards, the kind she likes. I can't even have a holiday, because she grows restless and worse when I'm away."

And then there was a significant paragraph, brightened by a certain spice of resentment. "Gramp remains just the same . . . not a day older and just as strong as ever. It looks to me as if he'd live forever. *I don't see what I've done to bear such a cross!*"

The letters from Ellen grew steadily fewer and more unsatisfactory. With her old instinct, she wrote only of those things which were of no importance, bits of news concerning the health of Clarence and herself, comments on the heat, even stories which she had read in the newspapers. Of her unhappiness she said nothing, though it was at the moment the one thing which dominated all her existence.

After the stifled farewell on the afternoon in May Callendar appeared to vanish. Clarence returned and they gave their party for the Bunces—a party to which Mr. Wyck, somewhat uppish and deeply wretched, brought a spinister heiress from Brooklyn. They played pinochle and drank beer which the radiant Clarence brought in from a delicatessen store. Ellen, it must be said, behaved beautifully and played for them to dance until the tenant from the floor below, a retired actress with yellow hair and a white poodle, made a profane protest to the janitor. She was kind to Clarence and even affectionate, as if in some way the tenderness brought her peace.

Only once was there an unpleasantness and this occurred when Mr. Wyck, finding her alone in a corner looked at her out of his green eyes and observed, "I understand you're growing famous. I hear that you play a great deal in public . . . at fashionable parties."

For an instant, Ellen looked at him sharply and then, believing perhaps that he knew nothing, replied, "Not often . . . now and then. . . . It is profitable."

He did not address her again but sat meditating in a sour fashion, absorbed apparently in the color of the beer he held in his long soft hands, and presently, with the air of emerging from a fog of thought, he observed, "It's too bad Clarence can't enjoy the parties too."

"He would hate them," said Ellen abruptly.

This observation Wyck turned over in his mind and when he spoke again, it was with an air of confidence, of making a concession.

"No," he said, "I understand that. He wouldn't feel at home. He'd be the most miserable person there."

But the look in his eye, the soft insinuation of his voice said, without saying it, "No, you and I are different. We were made for the fashionable world."

Ellen laughed, but there was in the laugh a little sudden choke of bitterness. She came to her husband's defense. "I don't think he'd like it, but it wouldn't be on that account."

It was the most friendly conversation they had ever had, and although he did not address her again during the remainder of the evening, she was aware at odd moments that he was watching her. The sight disturbed her, perhaps because she understood vaguely that the anemic little man possessed an amazing sense of intuition. She understood too that, under the air of condescension which he observed toward the other guests, there was at work all the old hostility, heightened now by a new knowledge that had come to him from some mysterious source. It was as if she were in combat with a woman, sharp-witted and feline, over the possession of a man whom she had no desire to own. Absurdity enveloped the idea of any one fighting for possession of Clarence. He was so easy to possess.

Not even when she went to the Callendars' to play did she have a glimpse of Richard. The group had dwindled now, as one by one the friends of Mrs. Callendar betook themselves into the country. There remained during the hot months only the good-natured host-

ess and occasionally Sabine who was staying in town until Mrs. Callendar sailed. They made excuses for Richard; they told her when she noted his absence that he was at Newport, or in Philadelphia, or vaguely that he was in the country; they kept up a little game in which Mrs. Callendar and Sabine told lies and Ellen accepted them, and both sides knew that the other had no belief in the deceit. Beyond the shrewd probing which the plump Greek woman practised on the evenings when Ellen came to dine with her alone there was no sign on either side. Yet a grayness enveloped them all, altering in its descent the whole tone of their days.

Sabine gave least evidence of the change, but with her it was impossible from her behavior ever to discover the faintest knowledge of her heart, impossible to know anything that lay behind the shield of her terrible self-possession. She had betrayed herself only once, for an instant. Beyond that one could only judge that she was waiting . . . waiting . . . waiting . . . with an overpowering patience, as if she knew the rules of the world in which she lived would give her the prize in the end. There was magnificence in the sight of her, sitting there in the evenings, marvelously dressed, not beautiful but fantastically attractive, listening quietly to the music made by a woman whom she had every reason to hate.

They all talked of the same things, in the same fashion, refusing to admit that anything had happened to change the pleasant, even way of their existence; and each knew that the other knew exactly what she knew. There were times, after dinner in the dark library, when there would be long silences broken only by the faint click of a tiny coffee cup against a saucer. Each of them watched the others, and in those long evenings the two who were so old, so wise in experience, came to respect the newcomer who played the game quite as well as themselves.

A night or two before Thérèse Callendar sailed, Ellen came to dine with her alone. Throughout the long dinner, which the Greek woman had served in the library at a small table, they kept

up the game. It was not until the cigarettes and coffee were brought in that Thérèse as the servant closed the door behind him, said abruptly, "I want to talk to you about my son."

It came so suddenly, after so much waiting, that Ellen said nothing. She blushed and the tears came into her eyes. She kept silent.

"I think I know what has happened," said Mrs. Callendar. She did not speak now in her old cynical fashion, slipping quickly from one thing to another. All the evening she had been grave and now, mingled with the gravity, there was a curious warmth, a sympathy which reached out and touched Ellen. She understood, it seemed, that the matter had arrived at the point where it was necessary to go beneath the thin surface of their pretense, when she must delve under all those polished little speeches that made life move along an easy path and deal, directly, with a thing that was stronger than any of them.

"We all know," she continued softly. "We played the game very nicely, but now something must be done about it. Sabine knows it too. She's known all along and it hurts her perhaps more than any of us because she understands that in my son there are things which are beyond her control. . . ." She coughed. "For that, my dear, you are much better equipped. I hope you respect Sabine for an extraordinary woman . . . civilized. I think you might put her to torture and never succeed in making her cry out."

Ellen, sitting now with her head bowed as if she had been accused, said, "I know. . . . I know that."

"I know my own son . . ." repeated Mrs. Callendar gravely. "I know him well. We are very different in some ways . . . but I know him." Here she paused for a moment and stirred her coffee with the tiny silver spoon. "I've seen him when he fancied he was in love with a woman." She raised one plump hand and the soiled diamonds glittered darkly. "Oh, this has not been the first time. It has happened before. But this time there is a difference." She coughed and added, "This time instead of pursu-

ing the object, he has run away from her. . . . That makes it serious."

Ellen, mute and frightened by the frankness of the older woman, sat awkwardly, like a little girl, regarding her. Surely she had never heard any one talk in quite this fashion . . . so honestly and yet so calmly. In a moment like this she had expected anger, even denunciation; she had prepared herself for it.

"I don't know what is to be done about it . . ." continued Mrs. Callendar, "because I don't know everything. . . . In a case like this, one must know everything in order to make sense. You have done something to him. I don't blame you. . . . It is simply one of those things which happens. . . . I fancy if you had not met each other as you did, you would have met in some other fashion. . . ." Her green eyes narrowed and her lips contracted so that all her plumpness appeared to shrivel and vanish. She seemed suddenly to become vastly old and wizened. "Yes, I am sure you would have met. Nothing could have kept you apart." And then, plump and kindly once more, she said, "I don't know what it is you have done to him. I don't fancy he knows himself, but he's miserable. . . . You see, the trouble is that he is really romantic . . . just as I am romantic . . . and he's always pretended he was an experienced, cynical *homme du monde*. . . . In that one thing he is dishonest."

She reached over and in an unexpected gesture touched the hand of the girl so that Ellen, taken unaware by this movement of sympathy, began to cry softly.

"I *am* romantic," said Mrs. Callendar softly, "though you might not believe it. Listen!" She leaned forward. "Listen! I'll tell you a story about myself and you'll see. You'll understand then perhaps that I have sympathy enough to be of use in this matter . . . because in a time of this sort, it's sympathy that's needed more than anything else."

And then she settled back and between puffs on her cigarette related bit by bit, from the very beginning, the romantic story of her elopement with Richard Callendar's father. She told the

story with an Oriental sense of color, and slowly before the eyes of the girl she recreated the color of Constantinople in her youth, all the magic of the summer palace and the Bosphorus by moonlight, all the desolation of the Greek aunts, all the crafty manner of the rich old Dikran Leopopulos, and above all the somber glow of the love she had known for the blond and handsome young American. Under the spell of her own tale she began to speak half in French, half in English, but Ellen, listening, became so caught up in the magic of the story that she understood it all, even those things which Thérèse Callendar related in an alien tongue. The tale set fire to a vein of warmth in the girl which until now had gone undiscovered, save only at times when, lost in her music, it had emerged translated into a beauty of sound. For the moment even the plump Greek woman herself appeared no longer to be old and ugly and covered with diamonds in need of cleaning. In the fervor of her story, she attained for a passing instant the quality of youth and of a fleeting beauty out of the Levant.

And when she had finished, she leaned back and said, with a wicked chuckle, "*Voyez*. I am ugly now and fat. But I was not then." Then she sighed quickly and looked down at her rings. "You see the thing is that he died . . . he was drowned before we had been married two years."

Again Ellen kept silent. There was nothing for her to say that would not have been trivial and idiotic. She waited and presently Thérèse said, "You see, I can understand. . . . I wanted you to know that. . . . One would have said that he and I were separated by a thousand things. None of them made the least difference."

It was Ellen who in the end interrupted the strange, breathless silence which enveloped them at the conclusion of Thérèse's story. She murmured, "It was nothing that I meant to do. . . . It happened. . . . I don't know how. . . . It happened without either of us saying anything. It was," (she groped for the words

and collapsed into banality), "It was like a flash of lightning."

"It would be," said Thérèse, "with him. I don't believe he understands what it is."

"And I haven't seen him since."

"He has never spoken a word of it. . . . Always he tells me."

Something of the girl's awkwardness had vanished now, and between them there was a sense of a sympathy that had not before existed. It was the manner now of two women who were confidants.

"There is nothing I can do," said Ellen, "nothing. It is hopeless."

"You were a brave girl to go on coming here."

A flash of Ellen's old spirit returned as she said, "What could I do? Running away helped nothing. . . . It's hard because I have had no one to speak to . . . no one I could talk it over with. . . . You see, I am really alone. . . . It never mattered before. . . . I mean . . . the loneliness."

They faced each other, two women, each possessed of intelligence and honesty, striving to discover some way out of the tangle in which they were caught. Being wise, they knew perhaps the uselessness of violence. They waited, each knowing well enough that there was much more concerned than simple romance. Thérèse knew, no doubt, that the young woman who, stripped now of her fierce secrecy, sat opposite her, frightened and tearful, was not simply an adventuress seeking to gain a husband and a vast fortune. She knew, too, how much these things would have meant to the girl, and she understood well enough that Ellen, face to face with an unaccustomed tangle, lacked the experience which could have helped her.

On Ellen's side, she must have been conscious of facing a mystery. The plump woman, covered with dirty diamonds, was her friend, yet, despite her kindness, she was remote, separated from her by differences of blood, of tradition, of a million things. She was as remote, as beyond comprehension in the subtlety of her

wise, old mind as her dark son, even in the moments when he was most disarming. Her own people Ellen might battle and overthrow, but these were different. She could not even fathom the woman's friendliness.

"I am not a cheap adventuress," she repeated. "Don't believe that."

"My dear girl, I am not such a fool. . . . I was not born yesterday. . . . I have dealt with women of that sort."

"You see," said Ellen, folding and refolding her handkerchief like a little girl, "I am quite alone. . . . I looked on him as a friend . . . as I might look on my own brother. . . . I never thought of such a thing."

At this Mrs. Callendar made a clucking noise and bowed her head for a time in thought. At last she said, "Ah, but that is where the trouble lay! That is where you were wrong! . . . Such a thing is not possible with him. . . . There is acquaintance and the next step is the other thing. He is not, after all, like your American men."

Ellen looked up now and ceased to plait the handkerchief. "I can see that . . ." she said. "I've learned a great deal. I've thought of nothing else for weeks. . . . It frightens me because I can't stop thinking of it when I want to . . . not even at night. There's never been anything like it before." She looked directly at Mrs. Callendar. "Could I talk to you . . . ? Could I tell you the truth?"

"My dear, it is the only way we shall arrive anywhere."

"I've got to tell some one . . . I've thought and thought about the whole thing. I don't know what it is he wants of me. He has never said anything. . . . We have never even mentioned it." She smiled faintly. "Perhaps I am a fool and silly. We've never mentioned it in any way. . . ."

Mrs. Callendar interrupted her. "Ah, but that's it. That's what makes it serious. . . ."

"Perhaps I'm talking of something that doesn't exist."

"Oh, it exists all right." Thérèse knocked the ash from her

cigarette. "You would know it if you had seen him." She turned sharply to Ellen. "Why do you think he is avoiding you? It's not because he regards you as a virgin not to be defiled. It's himself he's thinking of too."

"But there is nothing to be done. . . . Nothing can be done."

"Do you love him?"

Ellen smiled again. "How should I know that? I've not been in love a hundred times. I had never met anything like this. I had my whole life planned, perfectly, to the very end. I don't know what's to happen now."

Before she answered Mrs. Callendar sighed. "If there is enough of love, anything is possible." She raised her plump hand. "Oh, I'm not being a romantic fool. I only mean that if there is enough of passion . . . If you believe that it is the greatest thing of all, worth all else in the world, then take what life can give you. Let nothing stop you. It will come to an end soon enough and you will be unhappy, but you must understand that in the beginning. If you are to have remorse, have it before you act and be done with it. . . . That is the only rule for intelligent people, and they are after all the only ones who dare know such a rule."

For a time Ellen sat quietly regarding the floor, lost in consideration of all her companion had said. It was a bewildering speech and colossally unmoral. She must have thought, then or later, of the vast distance which separated the girl who sat in Mrs. Callendar's drawing-room from the girl who sat on Hattie Tolliver's knee the night that Jimmy Seton rang the bell and brought Clarence into her life; yet she had only gone a little way. Turning the speech of Mrs. Callendar over and over in her mind, she became aware that it savored curiously of Lily. It was a consciousness always present, an awareness of Lily's charm, her beauty, her curious soft independence, the beauty, the talk, the scandal that centered about her. . . . If Hattie Tolliver could have known it, the influence of wicked Lily was stronger at that

moment than it had ever been. Out of all the talk, the experience, the sorrow, Lily was emerging slowly from the well of mystery that engulfed her.

"It is impossible," said Ellen slowly, "because I could not marry him." She hesitated for a moment and then added in a whisper, "I have a husband already. . . . I've never told any one."

She began to weep once more, gently and wearily, while Mrs. Callendar, poised and remote in black satin and diamonds, regarded her with an expression of astonishment.

At last the older woman said, "You should have told me this. It changes everything. Sabine told me that you had a lover . . . that she had seen him at your flat."

"That was my husband."

"You never spoke of him, so we had nothing else to believe." She smiled suddenly and touched Ellen's hand once more. "I was right then. I did not believe it possible."

Ellen looked at her silently, in amazement. "But you had me to your house, as a friend. How could you have done that when you thought me a woman of that sort?"

Across the gulf that separated them, Mrs. Callendar laughed and said, "But that would have made no difference. I learned long ago not to be concerned with the morals of my friends. You are what you are and I like you, my dear, whether you had one lover or fifty, except that if you had had fifty I should have known you to be a woman of no taste." She paused and lighted another cigarette out of the box she had sent her from Constantinople. "I had no idea," she continued thoughtfully, "how wide the difference was. . . . Besides, you are a musician . . . an artist. One does not require of an artist the morals of the *bourgeoisie*. One expects such things. It is so because it is so, and there's an end to it." She puffed for a time, slowly, lost in thought, and then added in a kind of postscript. "My poor girl! What a lot you have not learned! You will not be free until you do what you see fit . . . regardless of any one."

And now Ellen found herself once more where she had begun: In all their talk they had arrived after all nowhere, because they had been talking all the while of two different things. Mrs. Callendar, conscious perhaps of the hopelessness of the muddle, rose and began to walk slowly up and down the room, an absurd and untragic figure, plump and much laced but energetic and clever. After a time she came and stood by Ellen's chair.

"I take it then," she said, "that you do not love your husband."

"I don't know," Ellen replied dully, "I don't know. It is nothing like this new thing . . . nothing at all. I am sorry for him. Perhaps that is it."

"It is a match then that your parents made?"

"No. . . . It is not that. . . . It's quite different. . . ." She hesitated for a moment and then said in a low voice, "I ran away with him. . . . I eloped. It was not because I loved him. It was because I had to escape. I wanted to be a musician. . . . I wanted to be great. Lately I have thought sometimes I was only a fool . . . that I have only confused and ruined everything."

This Mrs. Callendar pondered for a time, returning to her chair and lighting another cigarette before she spoke. "And why do you pity him?" she asked presently.

"It is because he is so good and so humble. I am afraid of hurting him. He has been good to me and generous. It is almost worse than if I had loved him. . . . Don't you see?"

"You would not divorce him?" asked Mrs. Callendar.

"No," Ellen cried suddenly. "No, I could not do that. . . . I couldn't. . . ."

"And you would not run away from him?"

"It is the same thing in the end. . . . It would hurt him. It might kill him. . . . He's such a good man . . . so kind, so helpless. He wants me to love him always. . . . He's done everything he could for me . . . everything and more than he is able to do. You see. I told you there was nothing to be done."

"No," said Mrs. Callendar slowly, "I'm afraid there is nothing

to be done. . . ." Again she rose from her chair and walked over to the window. "You had best think it over." She turned and faced Ellen. "I will talk to Richard. I will not sail tomorrow. I will stay. It must be settled somehow, for the sake of all of us. . . . I have not forgotten Sabine. She must be considered."

33

It was long after midnight when Ellen, entering the cabriolet at last, was driven off by the impatient Wilkes to the Babylon Arms. When she arrived, she found Clarence in the lower hall pacing up and down with a pitiful air of anxiety.

"I should have telephoned," she said, "but I forgot. I did not know how late it was. You see we talked for a long time afterward."

And then she kissed him gently, swept again by the old sense of pity. During all the drive home, in the long moments when she had been alone in the dark cabriolet, she had struggled, bitterly, with the puzzle that confronted her, knowing always in the back of her mind that whatever happened she could never run away with Richard Callendar. She might fall ill, she might die, she might go mad, but there were some things which she could not do. Deep down in her heart there was a force that was quite beyond her, a power that was an instinct, as much a physical thing as her very arms and hands. It was the part of her that was Hattie Tolliver.

There had been the other way out, but when she kissed Clarence she knew that it too was impossible. When she saw him waiting, his eyes wild with anxiety, his whole face suddenly lighted up with joy and adoration at sight of her, she knew too that she could never divorce him. His very weakness destroyed her, for she knew that if she had asked him he would have freed her. There

was nothing that he would deny her . . . nothing that he was able to give; and what she wanted from him, he would never be able to give because he was, after all, only a poor thing.

But the hardest part of the ordeal lay before her. It was the meeting with Callendar when, for the first time, they would both be forced to recognize the truth and deny it, forever. She understood this well enough; she was in a way even eager to have it occur at once so that she might put the memory of it behind her, so that she might stamp out the incident forever and go on her triumphant way. It came at last when Callendar, in a brief note, asked if he might call upon her. The letter, in a headlong handwriting so unlike the mocking cynicism which he cultivated, gave no hint of what was in his mind. It asked merely that she set a time and place.

She bade him come to the apartment in the Babylon Arms and he came, strangely sobered and quiet, with a chastened look in his gray eyes. At sight of him he appeared to her, as it seemed long afterward, for the first time in any semblance of reality; he existed with a new clarity, a new distinctness of outline. It was as if she had never seen him rightly before, as if until now he had been to her some one whom she accepted vaguely without questioning. Only one quality carried over completely into the new Callendar; it was the old sense of conflict, of will against will, of a pleasurable, almost perverse sensation of struggle. The new Callendar was an older man in a fashion she could not altogether define, save that the impression was related to the effect which his mother had upon her, of weakening and diminishing all reliance in herself.

The first thing she said to him was, "I am frightened."

He took off his hat and laid it quietly on the divan by the side of his stick and then he turned and looking at her with his strange gray eyes, replied, "I too am frightened."

Among the cheap furniture that crowded the room the old sense of his superiority returned to her, mingled this time with a new

consciousness that he was utterly alien, stranger than she had ever imagined until now. She sat down quietly while he drew a chair to her side.

"I've talked to my mother," he said. "Or rather she talked to me. She's told me everything."

Under the gaze of the gray eyes, Ellen turned aside, discomfited, wretched. "I wasn't honest," she murmured. "I'm sorry, but I hadn't meant to be dishonest. I never thought it would make the least difference to any one."

"It has made a difference though . . . a great difference. It's changed everything." He reached over with a tenderness that suddenly weakened her and took one of her hands in his. She knew his hands; she knew them as she had known Clarence's on the night in the Setons' parlor when she had judged him nice enough but a bit of a prig. Callendar's hands were slender, dark and strong, beautifully shaped in a way that made her fear them. When they approached her, she became weak; she felt that she was losing herself. She could not have explained the feeling save by a sense she had of their power. He was talking again, softly in the low voice with the thin trace of an accent, like Lily's.

"I was foolish," he was saying. "I should have known that the thing which made me afraid of you was the thing that would have kept you from taking a lover. I'd never encountered anything quite like it before." He smiled and touched his mustache gently. "I was a fool. I should have known better. I thought perhaps you would love me some time . . . not without a struggle. No, I never expected that. I thought we might understand each other. . . ." For an instant the incredible happened. Callendar was blushing. It was a thing which she had not seen happen before. "I thought that one day we should come together. . . . I thought you were an artist, living as artists I have known do live. I was idiotic. I should have known better. You'll forgive me that . . . won't you?"

For a moment she did not answer. The sound of his soft voice, the touch of the dark hands had taken possession of her. Dimly

she knew that she should have been insulted, yet she had no feeling at all, no sense of indignation; there was only a curious faintness that made her afraid. Somehow she understood that all this in reality had nothing to do with insults, with conventions, even with laws. It was something which might never again come her way and yet something which was to be feared, because it might destroy her forever. At last she said, "Why should I forgive you? It would make no difference now. . . ."

"It would make a difference. . . . It would make a difference," he said quickly. "I want you to marry me. . . . We can arrange everything. It makes no difference how." And then after a sharp silence, he added in a low voice, "There is a magnificence about you, . . . a bravery . . ." And the rest of the sentence trailed away so that she did not hear it.

Out of a great depth as if by a great physical effort she returned into the daylight. She found her lips moving. She found herself saying over and over again, "I must remember. . . . I must remember. . . . I must not ruin everything." He had never even asked whether she loved him. He had accepted it as a fact. He had asked her nothing. He had come simply to take her.

Then she withdrew her hand slowly and sat staring at it with an air of looking at some object unfamiliar to her. "I can't marry you," she said slowly. "I can't. . . . I can't. . . . There is nothing to be done. . . . There is nothing to be done." And she began to cry silently, so that the tears fell down upon her hands.

The speech appeared to astonish him, for he made no effort to regain her hand but sat staring at her as at a stranger. When at last he spoke it was in a voice that was low and caressing, but the tenderness had slipped away and in its place there was a hardness, as of steel; it was like a sudden glimpse of claws emerging from a soft and furry paw.

"Is it because you won't give him up," he asked, "as you told my mother?"

"It is because I cannot give him up. . . . I cannot treat him that way. . . . I cannot . . . cannot."

The steel in the voice emerged a little more sharply. There was an edge to it now, sarcastic, cutting. "Is it because he is so fine . . . so handsome . . . so magnificent . . . so dazzling?"

He repeated thus all the things that Clarence was not, and so he gave her the last bit of strength that she required, for the sound of his voice, the sharp edge of the sarcasm, filled her with a sudden anger and a wild desire to protect Clarence as something which was her own. She found herself fighting for a man who was none of these things against a man who to her was all of them. It struck somehow at her sense of gallantry . . . that Callendar who had everything should sneer at poor Clarence who had nothing.

She said, "It has nothing to do with that. . . . There are some things that one cannot do. . . . This I will not do." She dried her eyes and sat more erectly. "There is no use. . . . There was no use in your coming here. . . . My mind was made up . . . long before you came."

At this he turned angry. "You are like all your women. . . . Love to you is nothing. . . . It is something to be controlled. You don't know what love is. . . . You would exploit it. . . . You are like all your women."

So he talked thus for a time in a childish vein strange and new while she sat impassive, conscious all the while of the power he could exert over her, a power that had to do with the beauty of his hands, with the strange quality of his eyes, with the sound of his voice, with the soft catlike way in which he moved; yet she remained in some mysterious way safe from that power. It was, perhaps, her intelligence which saved her, for as she watched him she gained slowly a curious intuition of what he might do to her if she yielded. The old sense of conflict was fanned into a new life, more intense than it had ever been. He sought to overpower her will. She knew all at once that this was the very essence of his confused, unreasonable emotion.

And as she listened to him her woman's instinct for the dra-

matic came to her aid. She saw herself sitting there calm and a little cold, slowly but surely winning in the battle. She listened to his abuse. It did not enrage her. It did not even make her weep. It seemed rather to increase her coldness, her very strength. She felt him beating against the wall of her serenity and a kind of fierce triumph flowed through her body. For a time she possessed truly a great magnificence. At a little distance, she stood outside herself and watched the spectacle. She saw him standing by her, white with anger.

"You have lied to me. . . ." he was saying. "You have never cared at all. . . ." And again the reproach. "You are like all your women . . . cold . . . magnificent . . . not worthy of love." He came nearer to her. "I will love you. . . . I will teach you what love can be. . . . What does he know of love . . . ? Nothing. . . . I will give you a happiness such as you never dreamed of. . . . I . . . I am a lover. . . . I know these things."

And then he went down suddenly upon his knees, the steel gone swiftly from his voice; the warmth and tenderness flowing back. "You will not refuse me." He leaned forward and pressed his head against her. "You cannot. . . . I will give you everything . . . all the things which he cannot give you. . . ." And again he took her hands and this time kissed them passionately in a fashion that frightened her and filled her with the old weakness.

The spectacle of his humility, of this sudden collapse of what to her was his dignity, his will, his strength, astonished and embarrassed her. In her coldness it seemed to her incredible that any woman, least of all herself, should possess such power over any man. It was all unreal, beyond belief, and yet it fed her pride and gave her strength with which, one might have said, to destroy her own happiness, to resist the force of circumstances, even of nature, as she had defied it once before in marrying Clarence.

At last he rested his head against her knee and she bent over him, touching his dark hair with gentle fingers.

"Don't," she said. "Don't. . . . Please don't. . . . It is not good. I know better than you. . . . I should always be thinking of him. . . . I should never be happy, so neither of us could be happy. There are some things which I cannot do . . . and this is one. It is impossible."

They said nothing more. Richard remained kneeling with his head against her knees and slowly the old peace which she had not known in months took possession of her, heightened now by a new knowledge of her completeness and power. It was a kind of satisfaction which was new to her, an emotion which was heady and intoxicating. She was uplifted, free now of Callendar, free of Clarence, free of everything in all the world . . . alone, liberated, triumphant. She had defeated them all. And when he turned toward her for the last time there was a look in her eyes which said, "Is is no use. You need have no hope. It can never be."

On leaving, he kissed her hand, gently this time as if the passion had gone out of him. All he said was, "I shall do then what they expect of me. Some day you may wish for what you have thrown away. . . . I don't imagine a thing like this happens every day."

He was polite but, like herself, he was unbroken. He appeared to have regained possession of himself, to have become cold and calm and even a trifle indifferent. That was all he said and when he had gone the sight of his back, so slim, so strong, so inscrutable, filled her with a sudden weakness, for she knew that she had closed the door not alone upon Callendar but upon his mother, upon Sabine, upon the big house on Murray Hill, upon all that she had built up with such terrible patience.

He did what was expected of him. In a fortnight there appeared in the newspapers an announcement of the engagement of Richard Callendar to Sabine Cane. It described the great fortune of the prospective bridegroom and enlarged upon the social position of the happy couple. On the same day there was a paragraph

apprising the world of the fact that Thérèse Callendar had sailed as usual to spend the remainder of the year abroad. But there was nothing said of the girl whom the world had seen lunching with Richard Callendar in Sherry's. She was talked of, to be sure, in the circles in which Mrs. Champion and the Virgins, Mrs. Mallinson and the Apostle to the Genteel, were shining lights. They agreed that it must have been the clever Thérèse who disposed of the girl (perhaps paid her well) and made the match she desired; and they predicted with some satisfaction an unhappy life for Sabine. But Sabine in the end had won her game of patience, though she never knew the reason.

34

IT was in the weeks which followed the final meeting that Ellen came really to suffer. Together there in the shabby little room she had been sustained by the very struggle between them, by all the excitement that warmed and strengthened her. Now that he was gone forever, he kept returning to her in a fashion more terrifying than he had ever been in the flesh. Even at night when she lay in the apple green bed, so near and yet remote from Clarence, trying always to conceal from him the faintest suspicion, she could not free her memory from the sound of his voice and the persuasion of his hands. The memory of him haunted her, so that she grew pale and thin and Clarence, filled as always with nervous anxiety, urged her to go away into the country. In moments of depression she even reproached herself with being a fool for having thrown away what Callendar could have given her . . . his wealth, which she needed, the place which he could have given her in the world. Indeed when life seemed altogether hopeless, she went so far as to contemplate a return to the Town, a thing she had sworn never to do save in triumph.

Clarence, understanding dimly that she was unhappy, sought to help her with a kindness that hurt her more deeply than any

cruelty could have done. There were nights when he lay awake listening until the gray light appeared over the river and the sound of her regular breathing told him that at last she was asleep. Beneath the strain he too became pale and thin. His nose grew more pointed and his little round shoulders more and more stooped. In the mornings when Ellen, busy over his breakfast, caught rare glimpses of him, as he patiently did his exercises on the floor of the bath room, she was smitten with the old sense of pity at the thinness of his poor body. It hurt her in a fierce way because it was so different from the catlike suppleness of the man who was gone now forever. It was the valiant quality in Clarence, the struggle to be worthy of her, to make her always love him that made her helpless. Until now she had never clearly understood the power he had over her. It was the terrible power which the weak have over the strong.

It proved a hot, breathless summer when the asphalt turned spongy and the carriage wheels left great ruts and ridges. Even on the top floor of the Babylon Arms there was no coolness save on the rare nights when the wind, blowing up the river from the free and open sea, penetrated the high windows. It became more and more difficult too when Clarence came to her one evening and said, "I'm sorry dear, but we must economize. I find that we have been living beyond our income."

He said it so meekly, so apologetically and he looked so weary that she kissed him and replied, "I have money saved . . . money that I earned this winter. We can use that if we're in a tight place."

But he refused it. He assured her that there was no such deep necessity. He would not, he said, take anything she earned. He must support them always. And when she told him that this was absurd, he straightened himself and grew indignant.

"I couldn't do that," he said. "If you'll give me time, we'll be rich one day. . . . I'm getting ahead. It's not easy. There's so much competition. Don't think I'm a failure." He took her

hand and pressed it savagely. "You won't think that . . . will you? . . . Just be patient and give me time. I'll be rich some day."

Time! Time! She knew then what she had always known—that time would make no difference with Clarence. There was no way out. Whatever was to be done, she must do it herself. The old passion swept her. She would not sink. She would not yield to circumstance. She would die rather than fail!

35

WHEN Fergus came in early September to make his home in the little flat atop the Babylon Arms, the strain, the weariness, the very heat itself appeared for a time to dissipate. He was, of course, a novelty. Into an existence which had become flat and stale through the long routine of petty things, into a monotony which even the energy of Ellen was unable to dissipate, the brother carried a sense of excitement. At seventeen he bore a resemblance to his father, but only in a physical sense, for there was more dash, more vitality in him than there had ever been in Charles Tolliver. Tall, with wide shoulders and blue eyes that looked out from beneath sensuous drooping lids, he possessed the same blond charm which in Charles Tolliver's youth had made the vigorous Hattie Barr his slave. In the son there was even the same echo of that quality which the world, in its stupidity, called weakness and which was not weakness at all. The boy as yet was too young to understand what it was; the father, long past middle age, knew that it was a precious gift, a quality which protected him against the pettiness of the same stupid world. It was a disarming tolerance and geniality that made him friend alike to every one, beggar or prince, who passed his way. Father or son would have been at home in any part of the world; they would have found friends among the Lapps as easily as among the farmers of their own county; the Moros would

have received them as honored comrades. It was a quality that transcended limitations of family, of nationality, of race; it was a simple friendliness. And in their way they loved life as passionately as Ellen and Hattie Tolliver; the difference lay in the fact that their joy was a warm, glowing, steady emotion less spectacular and vivid.

It was Clarence who suffered the first onslaught of the brother's charm, for Fergus arrived to find his brother-in-law lying in one of the green beds, alone in the flat. Carrying bundles of luggage carefully prepared by the hand of Hattie, he burst into the room and came suddenly upon Clarence, asleep beneath the blankets, his mouth open a little way, his face a shade near to the green of the painted beds. Asleep and off his guard, Clarence was not a spirited picture. Fergus could not have remembered him distinctly, for he had seen him but twice and then long ago in the days when he was courting May Seton. More than three years had passed and Fergus, standing now at the foot of the bed, big and placid and blond, regarded his brother-in-law with the air of a stranger. Clarence slept quietly; his narrow nose appeared more pinched than it had been; the brown tousled hair had thinned until at the back of his head there appeared a tiny island that was entirely bald. The nervous, knotty hands lay outside the cover, pale and covered with pallid skin that was transparent and showed beneath it a network of tiny blue veins.

If Ellen had come in that moment, her brother, in his naïve honesty, might have turned to her and asked, "What have you done to him?" But she did not come and, as he turned to leave the room, Clarence stirred and opened his eyes. Out of the depths of his sleep he emerged painfully, leaning for an instant on one elbow and staring silently in reply to the cheery "Hello" of Fergus.

"It's me—Fergus," said the boy. "I just came in."

Again Clarence stared for a time and then murmured slowly. "Oh! yes. It's you! . . . I didn't recognize you at first. . . . I was having a dream . . . a bad dream. Won't you sit down?"

It was a stiff greeting, somewhat awkward, not because the boy was unwelcome but because Clarence, who would have welcomed the devil himself for the sake of his wife, was ill at ease. It may have been the dream that disturbed him.

Fergus pulled up a chair beside the bed, and asked if his brother-in-law were ill.

"It's nothing," was the answer. "It's just a bilious attack. I have them every now and then. . . . I'll be over it in a day or two."

Then he lay back once more, wearily, and asked Fergus about his trip and about his mother and father and the people in the Town—all save the Setons. They made polite conversation to each other and Clarence, beneath the spell of the boy's friendliness, melted a little so that the stiffness presently slipped away. But after a time the conversation for want of interest died back into silence and Fergus went to the window to feast his young eyes on the panorama of the river and the great city into which he had escaped. The boy was happy with an animal sort of joy which showed itself in the very lines of his tall body, in the brightness of his blue eyes. He too was free now, a rover, attached to nothing.

"It's a great place," he said presently, and turning from the window, added, "I think I'll get settled. . . . Where do I hang out?"

He had picked up his hat before Clarence said, "Wait. . . . There's something I want to talk to you about. . . . Just a minute." And then humbly after a pause: "It won't be long."

So the boy seated himself again and waited while Clarence sat up in bed, looking thin and worried in his mauve pajamas, and, after coughing nervously, said, "It's about Ellen. . . . You know her better than I do. . . . I've lived with her for three years but she's more like you. . . . She's not like me, at all."

Fergus stirred nervously and blushed a little, perhaps in doubt of what Clarence was to say.

"It's about Ellen," Clarence repeated, looking down at the quilt. "I don't think she's happy and I don't know what to do about it."

The boy laughed. "Oh, she's always like that. . . . It doesn't mean anything. She used to be cross with us at home most of the time." He knew Ellen well enough. She was a cross, bad-tempered girl whom you could control if you understood the method.

"I don't mean that. . . . I've known her when she's like that. . . . This is different." He halted for a moment and fell to tracing the design on the quilt with his thin finger. He was thinking, thinking, trying to explain. "No, it's not like that," he said presently. "It's worse than that. She never complains. . . . She never says anything. Only it doesn't go away. . . . It hangs . . . like a cloud. I'm not meaning to complain about her. . . . It's my fault if it's any one's. . . . But she's sad now . . . in spite of anything I can do." And then he added painfully, "She's unhappy."

Fergus waited. He sat with the air of a man desiring to escape, as if he would in some way repel these confidences and force Clarence into silence. He hated confidences, sorrow, trouble, of any sort. But Clarence was not to be silenced. He even grew a little excited.

"You see, the trouble goes back farther than that. . . . I can't explain it. . . . I don't know how. . . . Only she's never belonged to me at all. She's always escaping me. . . . And I try and try."

"It's her music," repeated Fergus. "She's crazy about it. . . . She always has been." Sitting there he seemed the symbol of a youth which could have no belief in disaster. He would never be hurt as Clarence was being hurt.

Clarence, ignoring the interruption, continued. "I married her and she's my wife. . . . She's a good wife and she does everything for me. . . . She never refuses me anything. . . ." He coughed and, looking down, added, "Not even herself."

The color in Fergus' cheeks flamed out now. He too became ill at ease.

"Don't think," said Clarence, "that I mean to complain. It's all my fault. A man ought to be able to make his wife happy. . . . I've tried hard. I've tried to make money. I'm good to her . . . but . . ." He trailed into silence for a time and when he returned it was easy to say, "But somehow she escapes me always. . . . There's something in her that doesn't belong to me. I don't know what it is because I've never been able to discover it. . . . And you can't talk to her about such things. . . . I've tried. Once I got almost to the point and she said, 'Don't worry, Clarence. You mustn't take things so seriously. . . . I'm all right. Don't think about me.' But I can't help thinking, because when she's unhappy I am too, because I love her so much. I'd do anything for her."

He lay back and fell to regarding the ceiling. Fergus, in silence, watched him now with a look of intense curiosity. Perhaps he guessed what it was Ellen had done to him. Perhaps he realized that, without knowing it, he had himself come to look upon Clarence in the same fashion that his sister regarded him . . . as a nice, kind, good man whom one tolerated. He was older and paler and more insignificant than he had been in the days when he courted May Seton. What the man needed perhaps was some one—a wife—who would lean upon him, who would think him a wonderful creature. And instead of that he had Ellen. Clarence rose on one elbow and said slowly, "But don't tell her. . . . Don't say I spoke of it."

It was the end of their talk. They never mentioned the thing again, but in some way the conversation appeared to bring Clarence a kind of dumb relief.

Of course, there were things that Fergus could not have known. He could not have known—Fergus, who took life so lightly—that the little man's only experience with love had been Ellen. He could not have known that Clarence was the victim of a sensual nature placed by some ironic trick of fate in the body of a prig.

He could not have known that the man was the victim of that little vein, so amusing to Lily, which with the march of the years beat less and less passionately. He could not have known that Clarence had discovered love in the body of Ellen and was now love's victim—that he was being destroyed because he had never known, even now, what love might be.

Of this secret Fergus said nothing to Ellen, perhaps because Clarence had asked him to keep silence and perhaps because he came to understand in the succeeding days that in her present mood, it would serve only to increase the strain. It was not until years afterward that he broke his silence and wrote her that he had known from the first day how matters stood. In his good-natured way, he sought rather to drive away the mood entirely. During the remainder of the week, while Clarence lay in bed, the brother and sister made excursions together into various parts of the city and Ellen, for a little time, grew again eager and filled with the old restless energy. They understood each other, this pair, in a miraculous fashion, though they were in many ways so different. They looked upon the world in the same way, as a great pie from which plums are to be wrested. They knew the same delights of being free and alone, the strange joy of being a part of a vast spectacle from which they were, at the same time, curiously aloof. For neither of them did the past exist. They lived wholly in the future. If there was a difference it lay in this—that Fergus looked upon the future as a land filled with a host of careless delights; to Ellen the future was a country in which lay the rewards of fame, of wealth, of vindication. She would force those who had mocked to bend their knees. As for these, Fergus never even thought of them. The world to him was a friendly place.

He began presently to attend his classes. Clarence recovered and returned to the offices of the Superba Electrical Company, and Ellen, pondering secret plans for the expedition to Paris and Lily, returned to her endless practising. In the evenings she played magnificently, for she had now a superb audience in the person of

Fergus who, sprawling on the divan with his eyes closed, listened to her in a sensual abandonment. There were times when it must have seemed to her that Callender had returned and listened. The old likeness, so elusive, so indefinable, came to live again in the long evenings. She could not say what it was, save that they both possessed a wildness not to be hindered by ambition or restraint or even laws. They were both among those who were born free.

But as the month of October advanced, a depression appeared slowly to envelope her. To Fergus the change became apparent and to Clarence it was acute. She betrayed herself by no single thought or action; it was far less simple and direct. Outwardly she went through the old motions of living. Sometimes in the autumn evenings when the husband and the brother sat listening to her music, Clarence would turn his pale eyes toward Fergus with a look which said, "You see what I mean? What am I to do?" The grayness trapped them all, even the genial, careless boy.

In the hours when she was alone, she did things which might have betrayed her, had they been known. Instead of spending the long hours at her piano she walked for miles, sometimes along the river, sometimes in the park. And she developed a new interest in newspapers, an interest which centered itself upon the columns setting forth the doings in the world of the rich and fashionable. From these she learned that Thérèse Callendar and her son had returned from abroad, bringing with them Sabine and a trousseau which cost fabulous sums. She discovered that the wedding party was not to be in Sabine's narrow house (it was too small) but in the solid brownstone house of the Callendars. The wedding, said the columns, was to be not in the flamboyant new St. Jude's on the Avenue but in St. Bart's two blocks away, a small church of dark brown stone, rather shabby but really distinguished. Knowledge of this sort she had picked up in the course of her brief adventure into the world. She understood the difference between St. Jude's which was the richest church and St. Bart's which was

the most fashionable. These things were put away in the little pigeonholes of her observing brain (so like the pigeonholes in Gramp Tolliver's walnut desk).

She learned all this and never once did she betray any sign of her knowledge or her interest. Clarence would have known nothing of the wedding save that Mr. Wyck, over one of their greasy lunches far down town, mentioned it to him with the sly suggestion that his wife might be interested and would no doubt be invited. Wyck appeared to know most of the details, for in the secrecy of his bleak room he read the society columns, and there was always the backstairs gossip which came to him through the two aunts in Yonkers. Over the apple-sauce, and under the eye of the peroxide blonde cashier, he insinuated other things, suggestions that Ellen might even be more interested than her husband imagined, but Clarence either was too stupid to understand these hints or in his loyalty saw fit to ignore them.

But when he returned to the flat he did say to Ellen, "I see, your friend Mrs. Callendar's son is being married. I suppose you'll be invited to the wedding."

Ellen glanced at him sharply and then returned to her work. "No," she said calmly. "I don't think I'll be invited. Why should I be?"

"I didn't know," he replied awkwardly. "I thought they were friends of yours."

"No. I worked for them. . . . A thing like that means nothing."

After that he was silent and for a time wore an air of disappointment. She knew, beyond all doubt, that it would have pleased him to know that his wife had been invited to a fashionable wedding. The old ambitions, less vigorous now, stirred more and more rarely. To-night, for a moment they had been kindled, but it was the last time they ever raised their dangerous heads. Clarence read his newspaper and did not speak again of the event.

On the afternoon of the wedding the temptation was not to be overcome. For a long time she fought it and at last, putting on a large hat and a veil she descended from the Babylon Arms and made her way by tram car to the neighborhood of St. Bart's. Before the church there was a great crowd (a fact for which she was doubtless thankful) which pressed close against the awnings and peered at the carriages that were beginning already to arrive. There was, she felt, something at once comic and pitiful in the spectacle of men and women crowding and pushing into the gutters for a glimpse of the fashionable people who descended and swept across the red carpet into the church. Among the arrivals there were dowagers who strained through the doors of tiny cabriolets, cow-eyed young girls, elderly bachelors dressed with the stiffness of starch, whole armies of relatives and friends, moving forward with a concentrated air of indifference to the stares, jostled fairly by men with cameras who climbed about on the steps and even as high as the façade of the church in order to capture brief glimpses of such people as the Apostle to the Genteel, Mrs. Champion and her Virgins, the questionable Mrs. Sigourney (who was always news), and the dewlapped Mrs. Mallinson.

With the arrival of the bridegroom's mother the jam became terrifying. Women fought with one another to catch a glimpse of a fat little woman clad in purple satin with a bird's nest on which a few violets had been carelessly planted, perched high on her head. Ellen, taller than most of the crowd, was able to see without being seen. She caught a swift glimpse of Thérèse as she emerged from the door of the cabriolet, only to see her swallowed up at once in the press of the onlookers. She appeared calm and had the air of a woman well satisfied. After all, she had succeeded in uniting two great fortunes. The bride was all that she should have been. The future was assured.

Of Richard Callendar himself, Ellen caught only a swift glimpse—a flash, no more, of a dark handsome face paler than she had ever seen it. A moment later the bride arrived, but of

Sabine nothing was visible; her face was covered by a long veil of lace. The mob of democratic citizens rocked and quarreled and pushed; dowdy women from the suburbs elbowed their way through stenographers and errand girls; clerks and fat old men trod on the toes of angry females; and Sabine was swallowed up.

Ellen leaned against the stone of the church as if she had become suddenly faint. Here the sounds of the music came to her, distant and triumphant, now swelling, now diminishing, until at length it died away altogether to make silence for the ceremony.

It was not until the bridal party, still jostled by the crowd, came out of the church and descended the steps that she saw them fully. Standing now on a jutting piece of stone she saw Callendar and Sabine move toward the waiting carriage. They smiled as if that were what the world expected of them and once Ellen fancied that the bridegroom looked toward her. Of this she was not certain and she was sure that he could not have recognized her through the veil, but she slipped from her eminence and dropped to the sidewalk where she vanished in the pressing mob. Nevertheless she was suddenly happy and strong, for in the one swift glimpse of the two faces she had divined her victory. The face of Callendar, for all its fixed smile, was pale and a little drawn, and in the eyes of the bride there was a bright fixed look of unhappiness. Sabine, so intelligent, so grotesquely clever, must have known what Ellen knew—that although she had married Callendar she was not the one who possessed him. In the end she might perhaps lose her game of patience because, after all, it was not a simple game; there were in it elements beyond the control even of so shrewd a pair as herself and Thérèse Callendar.

All the way back to the Babylon Arms, Ellen hurried with an hysterical air of triumph. It may have been that she knew a profound feminine satisfaction in the sense of vanity gratified. She hurried too because Clarence would be waiting for her, tired and pathetic and hungry. It would please him to find her so happy,

so excited. In this strange confusion of moods she passed between the lions of the Babylon Arms and made her way up to the tiny flat. She was neither happy nor unhappy; it was emotion beyond either thing, entangled somehow with the old sense of triumph.

The dark hallway with the red walls was the same; the red carpeted stairway, its splendor gone now and the cordage showing through, was unchanged, as it had always been. It was only when she ascended the very last step that she discovered anything unusual. The door of the apartment stood open a little way so that she was able to look through the room into the distant stretches that lay beyond the river. For an instant she halted, looking about her. The key was in the lock. On the smoking table there lay the remnants of the cigar which Clarence always smoked on his way home from the office. His coat and waistcoat, which he was accustomed to hang neatly in the closet, lay on the divan. They had been thrown down carelessly. The red sunset above the river illuminated the shabby room in a fiery glow.

Standing quite still in the center of the floor she waited, listening for some familiar sound; and presently when there was no interruption of the stillness, she called "Clarence! Clarence!" in a voice that sounded queer and strange to her. The excitement had gone from her now, drained away by a curious sense of foreboding. In that narrow life where every day each small act followed exactly the same plan, the sight of a coat flung down carelessly terrified her.

She called again presently and, receiving no answer, she opened the door of their bedroom. It was empty. The room in which Fergus slept was likewise undisturbed. In the kitchen there was no one. Then slowly she made her way to the door of the bathroom. It stood open a little way as if inviting her, maliciously; yet it was not open wide enough for her to see what lay beyond. Gently she pushed it back until it struck some object that blocked its motion. Again she pushed, this time more firmly, and the obstacle gave way, moving a little to one side so that a foot became visible. It was then in a single, unreal moment, that she

divined what had happened. She pushed harder and the door flew back. Behind it on the rug where he had done his exercises so patiently lay Clarence, face down, motionless. He had fallen forward and from beneath him there flowed a thin, dark stream. It had touched the white of his shirt and discolored it.

There was no doubt that he was dead. There was no doubt as to how he had died. The pistol, which had always been in the drawer of the bedroom table, lay beside him on the white floor. In the gathering darkness she knelt down at his side and began to weep, wildly, hysterically, like a savage. The darkness and the silence engulfed her.

It was thus that Fergus found her when he came in at last.

A doctor came and after him a policeman, but there was nothing to be done. The man was dead, and, as they observed to Fergus, you could see how he came to die. There would have to be the nasty business of an inquest. The news filtered through the apartment and the elevator man and the defunct actress with the white poodle in her arms came and stood at the doorway, whispering together and offering sympathy. It was Fergus who, with all the efficiency of Hattie Tolliver herself, "took hold" and managed things.

As for Ellen, she shut herself away, with a knowledge that roused in her a new agony infinitely more profound and terrible than the first brief outburst. In the darkness of her room she lay, alone now, on one of the apple green beds, silent and quite beyond so paltry a manifestation as tears. In one hand she held a note, crumpled and damp, which had been read again and again.

It was brief although the dead man, in his agitation, had written some things over and over again. It was simple, humble, inarticulate, more real, more vivid than he had ever been in all his mild existence. It was as if all the mysterious substance that was his soul had been poured out in that last moment upon the crumpled bit of paper. He had written it in a great speed; it

seemed that, under the stress of fate, he had suddenly gone mad, flamed for an instant into a pitiful kind of heroism and then gone out forever. He had been almost poetic.

"Forgive me, beloved, for what I am doing. It was all that remained. It is better . . . everything is better now, and you will be free again as you once were.

"I must tell you what you will soon learn. No one can keep it from you. I am a thief. I have stolen money and now there is no way to escape. If I ran away, it would be the same as what I am doing. . . . It would be the end. I would never dare ask to see you again. I would never tell you where I had gone. What I am doing is the only way out."

(Here he had, in his agitation, written the same sentence twice as if he begged her not to hate him because he had been the cause of so much trouble. He had almost said, "Forgive me for being a bother to you.")

Then it continued, "It was wrong from the beginning. I should never have asked you to run away with me, because I was not good enough. I tried to be and failed. I was a poor thing. So now, after I am gone again, there will be nothing to hold you . . . not even from the man you really loved . . . if it is not too late. You see, I know the truth! I know the truth! I discovered it in time. Forgive me, dearest. I love you always."

Slowly during the long hours of the interminable night, the whole tragedy assumed a clarity of form. While she lay on the green bed, in a silence penetrated only by the faint nocturnal sounds that rose from the distant street, the little pieces fitted together . . . bits of the past and the present, sudden stabbing memories and poignant flashes of intuition, odd scraps of old emotions vanished now forever . . . the little pieces fitted together until, like a picture puzzle, they assumed a swift and startling completeness. She saw the answer in a quick bright flash; it was that she had destroyed him; she it was who had driven him into

the abyss. The bitterness lay in the fact that all the while she had tried to save him, to make him happy.

If he had stolen money it could have been for one purpose alone—to give her more than he had been able to give her, to make her believe that he was far greater than he could ever have been. She understood that he had fought for her sake to create an illusion of grandeur, to raise before her eyes the figure of a man, successful and clever, who was not Clarence at all but a creature who existed only in the troubled flights of his ambition. And it was this very figure which, toppling from its pedestal, had destroyed him. She had known all along that there was no such creature. She could have told him. . . .

His humbleness pained her. Even in the end he had chosen to destroy himself in a corner where it would make the least trouble.

There was, too, the vague confused affair of Callendar. The note said so little; it left the fear so incomplete. *There will be nothing to hold you, not even from the man whom you really loved.* He must have known that he had not freed her, even by his death, for he knew that in almost the same hour Callendar had himself ceased to be free. All that was gone now, lost forever, and a little time before it had been so near, quite within her grasp. In trying to have everything she had lost all save her soul and the fire which burned there. . . . *If it is not too late. . . .*

But the thing which hurt her most was the memory of two words which he had used. They were, strangely enough, words of endearment, of affection, even perhaps of something so strong as passion. He had dared in his note to say "dearest" and "beloved." He was gone now; he would not have to face her, knowing that because his love had fallen upon barren ground he was ridiculous. In life these were two words which he had never dared to use. They burned now like scars that would never heal.

She could not talk to him now; she could no longer still his uneasiness with empty words and a kiss which cost her nothing. He lay near her, just beyond her door, upon the shabby divan, but

she could not reach him. To the dead there was nothing she could say, nothing which she could explain. In death he had come to possess her, for it was she who was humbled now.

She did not hide herself away. When morning came she appeared, calm and cold, to aid a strangely subdued Fergus in all the bitter tasks of caring for the dead. She arranged the telegrams and even chose the wording for the one that went to his sister in Ogdensburg. In all of them she said merely that Clarence had died suddenly. The truth she withheld. (There was always his weak heart to lend credence to such a tale.) In the newspapers there appeared only a brief line or two recording the fact of one more suicide in a great city and this, of course, was never read in the Town or by the people who had known Clarence as a boy. So in the end, his mother was the only one who knew the truth and even of the truth there was a portion which she never learned; it was that her son was a thief.

Out of all the tragic confusion only one thing remained to puzzle her; it was how Clarence had come to know of Richard Callendar. The answer, never entirely clear, came to her from a source she had never considered, from a man whom she treated, when she bothered to think of him at all, as beneath her contempt.

In the midst of that first gray morning the door opened and Mr. Wyck came in, shabby and downcast, to pay his condolences. He returned to the flat where he had known the only happiness which had ever come his way, but he returned, clearly, under circumstances he had never foreseen in the most gloomy and portentous of his bitter imaginings. At the sight of Ellen, cold and capable, in the midst of her grief (for she did grieve in a fashion she would not have done for a man whom she had loved), his green eyes turned toward the tips of his boots and he murmured, "Ah, this is terrible . . . terrible," in the professional manner of an undertaker.

In his heart, he may have thought, "It was you who ruined him, you, who came here into this very flat, a nobody, to use him

for what he was worth . . . to turn me out into the streets." But he kept silent, perhaps because she had always terrified him, filling him with a sense of one standing upon the rim of a volcano. He was afraid of scenes, Mr. Wyck, and so his hate found its way into the open through devious, hidden channels. He had not the courage, it seemed, even to look at her now.

They stood for a time in silence by the divan, symbols of that queer, distorted figure of which the dead Clarence formed the third angle—a figure all awry, perverted out of all drawing—Clarence, so white and still, gone now beyond the reach of either of them.

Mr. Wyck muttered oily and incoherent consolations. . . . "It is a bitter blow. . . . One must be brave. . . . He was a good man. . . ." All the old banalities which somehow took on a bitter, ironical ring. And presently he snuffled and wiped his eyes, as much in pity for himself who had lost the one thing for which he had gambled, as for the man who lay quiet and still upon the divan.

Ellen, watching him, was filled with a slow, burning anger. She wanted suddenly to crush him as she had once wanted to crush poor May Seton, because he was sentimental, and silly and without strength. And suddenly it occurred to her to say abruptly, "It was not a case of suicide. It was not Clarence who killed himself. . . . It was others who killed him."

She had spoken in a sudden moment of humility, acknowledging her own guilt, and the speech, so abrupt, so unexpected, produced upon Mr. Wyck the strangest effect. He looked at her sharply, for the first time, and then averted his eyes; but in the brief glance she discovered the answer to the mystery. It was Mr. Wyck who had betrayed her secret. It was Mr. Wyck who had told the story of Callendar, distended no doubt, and perverted by his malice. She knew it by the look of terror in the shifty eyes. He had used this secret as his last stake. . . . And he had lost, forever, beyond all hope.

Almost at once he turned away from the morbid fascination of the divan, bade her good-by and hurried out of the door;

and Ellen, watching his narrow back with the weak, sloping shoulders, knew that she would never see him again. She was sure now that it was this poor, furtive creature, with his strange, perverted love, who had given the dead man his final push over the abyss into eternity. For even the theft would not have driven Clarence from her; it could have been only the knowledge that she was lost to him forever.

So it was a man whom she had scorned, a creature whom she ignored and who hated her, who in his poor fumbling way had set her free.

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SHE went to his own town for the funeral and there met for the first time his mother, a grim, tragic sort of woman with sharp, searching eyes and straight black hair pulled into a tight knot at the back of her neck. It was this woman with whom she shared the secret; none of the others knew, not even his sister (the one he had said played the piano), a mild, weary woman rather like Clarence, who was the mother of five children and went about throughout the visit weak and red-eyed with weeping. The neighbors flocked into the house, mostly middle-aged women and spinsters, black and crow-like, moving about in melancholy clusters with the air of vultures. They came and went, speaking always in whispers, saying the same things, wearing the same mournful countenances, talking always of their own losses and calamities, speculating always upon the deaths of certain well-established invalids in the community. Always they reached in time the same refrain. It was this—"If he'd been an old man it would have been different, but he was so young and so clever. He was such a brilliant fellow and doing so well in the city. He'd have been a big man some day. We were all proud of him here in Ogdensburg."

And Ellen, handsome and pale in her mourning, sat by quietly, listening while they surveyed her with a distant air of disapproval.

She kept silent. Perhaps to these crow-like women, Clarence had been a brilliant and powerful figure.

In the Babylon Arms there was little to be done. Ellen paid a visit for the first time to the offices of the Superba Electrical Company and there learned that Clarence had stolen money which he collected and failed to deliver. The amount was something over fifteen hundred dollars. When she heard it she murmured, "It was so little too! Why, I could have paid it if he had told me. To have killed himself for so little!"

But she knew, of course, that if he had confessed he would have destroyed that splendid creature which he fancied he had created in her eyes. He had preferred himself to be destroyed. In death it would not matter that she discovered the fraud: he would not have to face her.

She paid the money, out of her savings and out of the amount brought by the sale of the furniture. She sold even the piano he had bought her as a wedding gift. And when she had finished there remained but little more than a hundred dollars.

On the very day the furniture was being taken from the flat she told Fergus the whole truth concerning her plans. They sat together amid the wreckage, brother and sister, both understanding for perhaps the first time that they were faced by the new problem of Hattie Tolliver. Both knew that she had set her mind upon coming to them, and having tasted freedom, neither was willing now to turn back.

"There is Ma," said Ellen. "I don't know what's to be done about her. She'll be coming here to live before long and I won't be here. She's worked all these years to come where she can be near us and now I've got to go away. I'm going to Paris. . . . It's the only thing left."

Fergus looked at her. "But you don't know French," he said, "and you haven't any money."

"I can't turn back now. If I went back to Ma, it would be the end of me. I know that. I couldn't. . . . I couldn't ever

begin again. I've enough money to take me there. . . . I'll manage after that. . . . Besides, there is Lily. . . . She promised to help me when the time came. . . . The time has come. . . . I can't turn back."

Fergus listened in silence, moved perhaps by the new dignity that had come to her, a dignity touched with bitterness. She was beautiful too in a new fashion, more placid, more serene.

"You must be good to Ma," she continued. "She'll hate my running away, but I've got to go. She's a wonderful woman. She's the one who has sacrificed everything. She's always done it . . . for all of us. I couldn't go if I didn't know that you're the one she loves best of all. You're the one she worships. She loved you enough to let you go. I had to run away. You know it, Fergus, as well as I. You must be good to her. If anything happened to you, it would kill her. You mustn't disappoint her. One day we must all make her proud of us. I mean to do it, and then when I'm rich, when I'm successful, I can reward her." She paused for a moment and then added. "You see, she loves you best because you're so like Pa. You're the way he used to be when she fell in love with him."

The boy's face took on an unaccustomed gravity. He rose and looked out of the window over the beloved and magical city. "I'll do my best," he said presently. "I'll do my best. . . . She's a wonderful woman." (Yet neither of them would turn back now.)

In the room there was no sound for a long time save the ticking of the clock, wrapped now in paper to be carted away. At last he turned and said, "But you're going to Lily. . . . Ma will hate that."

"I know she will. . . . She's always been afraid of Lily. She needn't worry though. I can take care of myself. I imagine nothing very serious can ever happen to me again."

It was Lily again, always Lily who was concerned in the whole course of Ellen's destiny. Yet Ellen never knew how great a part she had played for she never knew, of course, that if

chance had not thrown her glamorous cousin into the path of Clarence on a wintry night years before, he might have been alive and happy now, the husband of a stupid woman who would have thought him as wonderful as the figure he had given his life to create. He had looked for an instant at the sun and been blinded.

So perhaps, in the end, Skinflint Seton had been right. *Women like that can ruin men . . . just by talking to them.*

37

THE world of Lily had its center in a house which stood in that part of Paris beyond the Trocadero in the direction of Auteuil and the Bois. Here she had lived for years, since the moment when she had found it agreeably necessary to live abroad. For her purposes the house possessed every advantage; it resembled, after a curious fashion, those convents of the eighteenth century to which ladies of fashion retired at the moments when they desired solitude and rest and yet wished not to be cut off entirely from the gaiety of the world. As the Baron had once observed, Lily herself belonged to the eighteenth century; there was about her always so much of luxury and indolence, so much of charm and unmorality.

The house stood in the Rue Raynouard a short distance from the place where it rushes down a slope to join a half dozen other streets in a whirlpool known as the Place Passy surrounded by magasins, cafés, and tobacconists' shops. It was, in all truth, an eighteenth century house, built in the beginning as a château in the open country on the outskirts of Paris between the city and the Grand Trianon of Versailles. Here in the open fields the Marquise de Seillac, an ugly, clever and eccentric woman, held a court of her own, a court indeed which in some respects outshone the splendor of Versailles. In her house were to be found the poets, the wits and the philosophers of the day. She

corresponded with Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists came frequently to work in the rooms which overlooked the little park and the sheep pastures beyond. Indeed the Sage of Ferney on his triumphant return to Paris had planned a visit to the Marquise and was only prevented by the fatal illness which overtook so swiftly his skinny old body.

The Marquise had been the last of her family. There is a Marquis de Seillac living to-day but the title is Bonapartist and has nothing to do with the ancient splendor of the true family. As an old woman, the Marquise clung to her house even with the approach of the revolution. During that cataclysm, which she faced in a bold and cynical fashion, she was allowed to survive because the people remembered her as the friend of the radicals and the philosophers who plagued their stupid King. She allied herself with the Girondists and took Madame Roland perilously to her bosom, and when the débâcle came at length her bony old body would have been dragged off to the guillotine along with the others save that she was so old and that Danton and Terezia Tallien intervened. So she died at last in her bed and the château became the property of the Directory.

Since her death it has known many occupants. For a time it served as a museum; it housed the American ambassador Benjamin Franklin, who gave his name to a street nearby; it passed through a period of neglect and emptiness and at last fell into the possession of a wealthy manufacturer of soap and chocolate. It was during his day and the day of his son that the château came to be pressed upon by other houses and by apartments in the florid German style, until there was left at length only the house itself and the little park designed by Le Nôtre which still remained the largest private garden in all the city of Paris.

The house turns to the world a deceptive face, for on the side facing the Rue Raynouard it is but one story high with a commonplace door and a single row of shuttered windows. It is this side which in the days of the Marquise faced the stables

and dovecote; so the house now turns its back upon the world and preserves for its friends the glory of its three story façade of Caen stone. The façade, broken by rows of tall windows, looks upon a high terrace lined with crumbling urns carved in the classic Greek manner and a garden with a reticulation of paths laid out by Le Nôtre to center upon the pastry-cake pavilion erected to the God of Love. Inside the high wall which shuts out the noise and dust of the Rue de Passy there are great plane trees with trunks mottled like the backs of salamanders, and laburnums that cluster close about the Temple of Eros.

One could live forever within the boundaries of the ancient house and garden, surrounded by luxury and beauty, receiving one's friends, seldom going into the world. It was an admirable house in which to live discreetly, almost secretly, and it was an admirable house for one of so indolent a nature as Lily's. For Lily had succeeded the chocolate manufacturer, and the château of the Marquise de Seillac with its ghosts of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, the wanton Terezia Tallien and the clever Madame Roland, was tenanted now by a rich American out of a country which in the days of the Marquise had been no more than a howling wilderness—a woman the world knew as a widow, beautiful, charming, discreet and indolent, living under the guardianship of the most respectable and stuffy of Bonapartists, the ancient Madame Gigon.

On a dripping morning of December, of the sort which makes Paris a wretched city in midwinter, a carriage drew up before the door of this house and out of it stepped Ellen Tolliver, pale from traveling but unusually handsome in the black of her widowhood. There was with her a small thin young woman, trimly dressed rather in the practical style of a professional traveler, with red hair and pretty bright eyes which had a way of observing the slightest things which occurred in her vicinity. The stranger (after haggling with the driver over the fare) paid him

and then, changing her mind, bade him wait for her. She pulled the bell with a swift, energetic jerk.

"It is a modest house," she observed to Ellen in short, ironic syllables colored by an accent that was indefinable. "A modest house for a rich American. Usually they are more flamboyant."

Impatiently she pulled the bell a second time and presently the commonplace door was opened by a Breton maid in a white cap who bade them enter. Inside, away from the dripping cobblestones of the Rue Raynouard, it was clear that the stranger succumbed to the magic of the house. For an instant, she remained silent, staring in astonishment at the long sweep of stairs and the array of glittering crystal. Then she made a grunting noise and addressed the maid in French.

"Madame Shane. . . . Is she in?"

"No," replied the girl. "She is at Nice. . . . She has been gone since two weeks."

The stranger translated the speech and for a moment there was a silence in which the face of Ellen, pale and handsome in her mourning, was shadowed by a sudden look of terror. It vanished quickly and she said to her companion, "Ask for Madame Gigon."

Madame Gigon was in. She never went out any more. At the moment she was in the drawing room. Should she ask if Madame Gigon would see them?

"This," observed the bright ferret, to the maid, "is Madame Shane's cousin. She has come to pay her a visit."

The stairway before them led downwards in the most unexpected fashion. Between panels of satinwood adorned with plaques of gilt and rock crystal and filled with candles, it swept down for the depth of two stories, past a gallery which led away on both sides, into a dim vista of polished floor at the end of which there was a high window with small panes of glass that gave out upon a garden. At the sight, a faint touch of color appeared on the cheeks of Ellen and her eyes grew bright with

interest. It was all far grander than she had ever imagined, more magnificent than she had hoped. In such a house she might stay quietly, interfering with no one. It was possible to remain hidden in its depths for weeks at a time.

"Shall I stay?" asked her companion.

"I can manage. . . . It's my affair. There's no use troubling you any further. It was good of you to have bothered."

"But what about speaking French?"

"Madame Gigon speaks English. She once had a school for English and American girls. . . . My great-aunt went to it."

Up the long stairs, remotely, the maid was returning now.

"Bien," she said. "Madame Gigon will see you."

"Au revoir," murmured the stranger. "If you want me, I shall be at the Ritz until the end of the month. . . . Miss Rebecca Schönberg. . . . You have my card. . . ."

And with that she vanished through the rain into the waiting cab.

At the foot of the long stairs Ellen found herself suddenly in the great drawing-room. Beyond, through the tall window draped in blue brocade, she had a vista of dripping trees and a wet garden dominated by a white pavilion that resembled a pastry. The room was long and rectangular, for all the world like the drawing room at Shane's Castle, save that it was not, even on this wet winter day, a gloomy room. There was in it far too much color. Even the satinwood paneling appeared warm and soft. At the far end before a neat fire of cannel coal she discerned among the shadows the figures of a tiny old woman and a small boy, sturdy, handsome and red haired. He sat at the feet of the crone, reading aloud to her in English and nearby lay two fat and elderly dogs, an Aberdeen and a West Highland. It was not until she had come quite close to them that they realized she had entered the room. The boy stood up and the old woman turned toward her with a curious dazed look in her eyes.

It was the old woman who spoke first. She peered, apparently

without seeing her, in the general direction of Ellen and asked, "Are you Mees Tolliver?"

The boy regarded her, frankly, with a pleasant friendliness.

"Yes," replied Ellen, "I am Madame Shane's cousin."

In an instant, as she watched the child and faced the sharp old woman, she grasped the identity of the boy. It came to her quickly, as a revelation out of all the mystery of the past. Of course she knew all about Madame Gigon; it was the boy for whom she was not prepared. About him there could no longer be any doubt. He was Lily's child and the old story was true. It gave her a quick, inexplicable feeling of relief, as if after so many years she stood in the open, knowing at last the truth. It did not produce any shock, perhaps because she had been for so long prepared for the knowledge. So she had said without hesitation *Madame* Shane, just as a little while before in order to take no chance in protecting Lily, she had said *Madame* Shane to Miss Rebecca Schönberg.

The old woman coughed and said slowly, "I don't speak English very well any more. I'm so old. . . . I almost forget. . . . Est-ce que vous parlez français?" And then, "Asseyez vous."

Ellen simply stared at her, and in the emergency the boy, polite and eager, said in a piping voice, "She wants to know if you speak French. . . . She wants you to sit down." His English was colored by an accent which struck Ellen with a remote sense of unreality. Lily's child! Her own cousin! Speaking English as if it were a foreign tongue!

"I don't," said Ellen. "Will you tell her that I know no French?"

It was the old woman who answered in labored English. "Oh, I understand. . . . I know what you say. . . . I can no longer *speak* English. . . . Asseyez vous. . . . Sit down."

It was only then that Ellen understood the peering look in the eyes of the old woman. She had been sitting down, all the while. The old woman, who peered at her so earnestly, was blind.

"Did Madame Shane know you were coming?" asked Madame Gigon.

"No, I had no time. . . . I left America in haste." She held back the truth. She did not say that she had come, deliberately and without warning, because she could take no chances on being refused. Sitting there, with only a few francs in the world, she felt secure. She was in Paris now in a house that was big and beautiful. The rest could be managed.

"She did not tell me. . . . She would have been here," continued Madame Gigon. Then, as if her brain were fatigued by the strain of speaking English, the old woman addressed a torrent of French to the little boy. When she had finished he advanced to Ellen, shyly, and held out his hand.

"She says," he repeated in the same piping voice, "that I must welcome you as master of the house. She says you are my cousin." He smiled gravely. "I never had a cousin before. And," he continued, "she says that if Maman had known she would have been here."

He stood regarding her with a look of fascination as though so strange and exotic a thing as a cousin was too thrilling to be passed over lightly. Touched by the simplicity of the child, Ellen drew him near to her and, addressing both him and Madame Gigon, said, "You are good to believe that I am Madame Shane's cousin. How could you know?"

Madame Gigon smiled shrewdly. She was withered and had a little black mustache. Again the boy translated her speech. "She says," he repeated, "that you have . . . une voix honnête." He hesitated. . . . "An honest voice . . . and that she knows the voice because she taught my mother in school and before her my grandmère. She says it is like my grandmère's voice."

As he spoke the old woman smiled again and wagged her head with extraordinary vigor. "Je connais la voix. . . . Je la connais bien."

Then she addressed the boy again and he translated her speech. "She says she is blind and will you come near so that she may touch your face?"

Ellen drew her chair closer so that it disturbed the fatter of the two dogs and allowed Madame Gigon to pass her thin hands in a fluttering gesture over her handsome throat and the fine arch of her nose.

"Ah," said the old woman triumphantly. "Le nez . . . the nose. . . . C'est le nez de votre tante . . . le même nez . . . précisément. C'est un nez fier . . . distingué."

"It is a proud nose," echoed the interpreter gravely. . . . "A high distinguished nose. . . . A nose like your aunt's."

And the old woman, wagging her head, fell suddenly into a silent train of old memories.

"My name is Jean," said the boy shyly. "I am ten years old. Would you like to see my book? It is in English. I can read English just as well as French." And he brought her Tom Brown's School Days and showed her the picture of the boys climbing the tree to rob the rook's nest. Ellen, leaning over his shoulder, was softened and showed a warm enthusiasm over the other illustrations. She even listened while he told the long story of Tom Brown.

Presently Madame Gigon joined their talk and for a long time they held a conversation, translated always by the boy, that was animated and illumined by a warm friendliness. It was this which presently filled Ellen with a passionate desire to weep. She took off her hat and sat on the floor with Jean and the dogs, while Madame Gigon and the boy asked questions about America and old Julia Shane whom Jean called "grandmère" and whom he had never seen. And presently the Breton maid appeared with tea (for Madame Gigon, though she was French, had learned the custom of tea among the English) and over Ellen there swept slowly a strange feeling that, at last, after having been away a long time, she had come home. It was here that she belonged,

here that she would be happy, in this great, beautiful house that was so friendly.

Jean was allowed one gâteau and the fat dogs devoured two apiece.

"She says," translated Jean, "that Maman told her you would come some day . . . just as you have come. She says she is not surprised . . . your great-aunt, my grandmère, would have done the same."

After tea, she was led away by the Breton maid up the stairs and along a gallery into which opened an endless procession of doors, until she came, at length, to the end, where a door was opened which revealed a square room dominated by a great bed hung with a canopy of brocade. The tall windows gave out upon the park which, lying now in the fog that succeeded the rain of an hour or two before, appeared blue and mysterious. In the heart of the mist the white pavilion showed vaguely, and beyond it, above the top of the garden wall, yellow globules of light from the lamps in the Rue de Passy cast the trunks of the old plane trees into sharp black shadows.

When the maid had left, she sat down before the bright small fire and without moving regarded the room closely, point by point, detail by detail. It was large and warm and beautiful, but the quality which moved her most profoundly was its elegance . . . the same quality that was so evident in the great drawing-room belowstairs. She had never dreamed that there could be such warm, old beauty. There was nothing here of the barren, gaslit pomp of Mrs. Callendar's dining room out of the Second Empire, and nothing of the vast Callendar drawing-room lined with grim Dutch ancestors and gilt cabinets of tear bottles and Budhas. This room . . . this lovely house . . . had been there always. It had been like this in the days of the ugly Marquise de Sevilac. The chaise longue on which she sat, the gilt chair that stood before the writing desk, the very mirror, with its dim rectangular panes of glass, had the effect of softening her. Indeed,

for a time, these things made her dimly uneasy; far back in her consciousness there rose a grotesque fear that if she once succumbed to the splendor of that great bed, she might never rise from it again, that it might weaken her by its very luxury. She regarded it almost with suspicion, touched by an actual fear of all that was too beautiful and too splendid. She might become, like Lily, indolent and idle and charming. And slowly the realization swept over her that she was changed. She became aware that she was a woman now; she no longer wanted to be like Lily. She was strong, as she had never been before, strong as Lily would never be. Luxury, idleness, charm were not the things she desired. It must be something stronger than that, more heady, more challenging.

Dimly she understood the appeal of the room and of the dark misty garden with its white pavilion. It was insidious and peaceful, like an enchanted palace that swam mirage-like in the blue fog. And again she was overcome by a sense of returning home after having been away for a long time. The white squares of Paris, seen through the rain-spattered cab-windows on the way from the Gare du Nord, had moved her deeply; they had given her a wild sense of freedom, of escape. But this was different, more languorous, more intimate. It was the thing for which she had been born, the thing which, all her life, she had struggled to attain. It lay on the opposite side of the earth from the black Mills and the plain houses of the Town.

And then, pathetically and slowly, there came over her the wish that, as once she had planned, Clarence might have known this old splendor . . . the splendor he had talked of seeing, "some day when they were rich enough." There was that white villa at Nice. . . .

She had understood, well enough, while she sat on the deck of the *City of Paris*, damp and chilled by the fog, that Clarence was not gone forever, simply because he was dead. She understood (indeed she thought of it constantly, even in the hours when she

had listened in fascination to the talk of Rebecca Schönberg) that since his death he was more real to her than he had ever been in life. While he had lived there had never been time to consider him. There was only time, now, when he was gone. The very affection she had for him in life was nothing to the affection she now experienced, and in this new emotion there was no pity, because pity had been effaced by self-reproach. The one desire which obsessed her was a desire to see him, to explain, to justify herself . . . Ellen, who had never bothered to justify her faintest whim. The power of the weak over the strong was still stirring. It had not altogether died.

Mingled with these very thoughts was the knowledge that somewhere in this strange city that was so familiar, Callendar and Sabine were living. They must be there quite near her; she was sure of it. They were moving about, dining, going to the theater and the opera, all the while in ignorance of what had happened to her, knowing nothing of her presence. For them, her reason told her, she was forgotten; yet something stronger than reason, a belief which beyond all doubt had its roots in the memory of Callendar's face upon his wedding day, told her that she was not forgotten. She had been there, with them, all the while, . . . perhaps, she thought triumphantly, even upon their wedding night. It was a thought utterly free from any desire to hurt Sabine; indeed, toward Sabine she had no feeling at all. Callendar was the one who roused her malice; she wanted to torment him, to be herself the one who dominated. The thought would have appeased her vanity save for the fact that she could never capture the whole truth; it was impossible because, in the months that had separated them, she had returned again to the old feeling that she did not know Callendar at all, that there was a part of him beyond her understanding, which escaped her always. She was afraid of him.

She dressed to the accompaniment of water dripping from the high roof on to the white terrace of the garden and, under the

stimulus of physical activity, she came presently to forget both Clarence and Richard Callendar. Her thoughts turned to Miss Schönberg, that small, good-natured, ferrety creature who was so kind to her. The encounter had occurred, by chance, on the *City of Paris* when the stranger, watching Ellen as she paced in her tireless way round and round the deck through the fog and the blowing rain, finally offered her a book to read. Ellen did not, as a rule, read anything, but she accepted the book, gratefully enough, more as a symbol of the stranger's friendliness than for its own qualities. She could not, now, even remember what it was, nor anything about it save that it was bound in green and was written by a man called de Morgan. She was, at that time, engaged in thinking of her own story, which was indeed quite as good as anything concocted by a novelist. For the sense of rôle, the awareness of herself as a dramatic figure "living by her wits," had grown upon her steadily, until in her mind there had been born a suspicion that such a rôle possessed a value. She was not, after all, commonplace. Already, though she was but twenty-four, tremendous things had happened to her . . . things which were romantic and even tragic, but things in which she found satisfaction. She had wished, as far back as she could remember, to have a life that was eventful. She wanted not to die until she had known her share of life, and in life she did not seek, like Lily, simple happiness and contentment. She desired experience, and so she resembled greatly old man Tolliver.

It may have been a sense of all this which attracted the stranger, for Miss Schönberg despite all her fine clothes and her habit of wandering from one spot to another, lived vicariously. She searched breathlessly for excitement. At thirty she was a confirmed and passionless virgin who lived on the fringes of life, perpetually stimulated by her sense of the spectacle. She had no real home nor any real nationality, unless one might identify as a nation that army of restless wanderers which moved from hotel to hotel across the face of Europe. Her best friends, or at least those who knew her most intimately, were the proprietors of such

establishments as the Hotel Negresco and the Beau Rivage, the Royal Splendide, Claridge's, the Cavendish, the Adlon, the Ritz and sometimes, for the sake of atmosphere, such a place as the France et Choiseul. She was an orphan and rich. In Vienna she had an aunt; in Trieste a handful of cousins; in New York an uncle who traded in diamonds. She was a Jewess and an emancipated woman, regarded with suspicion by the orthodox members of her tribe. And her emancipation had the fierce quality which envelops Jewish virgins who have determined at all costs to be free. It was a sort of aggressive freedom. She had never succumbed to or even understood love and it was extremely unlikely that her bright, shiny mind would ever be weakened by an emotion so sentimental.

All this Ellen had learned from her, either by intuition or by her own confession, for Miss Schönberg was much given to conversation, especially of the self-revelatory variety. From Ellen, in turn, she had learned what the girl chose to tell her, fragments of the truth strung together in such a fashion that the whole seemed an honest but rather dull and erratic tale. Yet she knew more of Ellen than the young widow ever guessed, for if Ellen had been as dull and uninteresting as the story she told, Miss Schönberg would never have bothered to address her a second time.

And now Ellen, as she dressed to dine alone with the 'blind old woman belowstairs, wondered why Rebecca Schönberg had been at all interested in her. She had, it was true, faith in her own star; she knew that she would one day be famous. That any one beside herself could have any intimation of this appeared on the surface preposterous.

When she descended, she found that Jean had gone to bed and before the fire there was only Madame Gigon with Criquette and Michou, the dogs, who had not stirred from their places but lay fat and lazy, basking in the warmth of the blaze. With the

eager interpreter gone, Madame Gigon, under the stress of necessity, cudged her old brain into speaking a very passable sort of English. At dinner, she told Ellen that Lily was stopping in the white villa at Nice. (It was not in Nice proper but Cimiez, high up on the hill beside the ruined Roman arena with a magnificent view overlooking Villefranche and the Bay of Angels. It lay just above the statue of Queen Victoria carven with a very realistic reticule and an umbrella.) She had telegraphed Lily to come home and greet her cousin properly.

After dinner they went, followed by the dogs, back again into the drawing-room to the luxurious chairs by the fire, and after a time Ellen rose and played at the request of the old woman some Brahms, an air from *La Belle Hélène* and finally a waltz or two of Chopin. It was a beautiful piano, for Lily respected music, and the sound of its low, mellow beauty led Ellen into playing more and more passionately. When at last her hands dropped into her lap and she sat listening to the distant sound of the boat whistles along the Seine, Madame Gigon began to talk.

She had seen George Sand once a long time ago when, as a bride, her husband, M. Gigon (who had been a curator at the Musée Cluny and had been dead now for more than half a century) had taken her one night to dine at Magny's where he might show her the celebrities of the town. She had seen George Sand, she repeated, come in with no less persons than Flaubert, yellow and bent, and the exquisite Théophile Gautier, to dine in a private room before the *répétition generale* of her play *Le Batard*, at the Odéon. The writer was an old woman then, come up from her farm, and bedizened with cheap jewelry, but every one noticed her. She had vitality. She was a sensation. . . .

And she could remember too the funeral of Jules de Goncourt and how they stood in the rain quite near to this same Flaubert. . . .

But Ellen had never heard of George Sand and knew, beyond his music, very little of Chopin, so it merely confused her to hear Madame Gigon call a man "she." Lest she betray her ignorance she kept silent, and sometimes she did not listen at all, because this ancient talk did not interest her, though it seemed to be the very core of all the life that remained in the blind old woman.

Madame Gigon talked far into the night, with the air of one who had long been shut in solitude, and as she talked her English became more and more clear. She spoke almost as easily as she had spoken in the days, half a century earlier, when she had taken Lily's mother and the other girls of the school on *pique-niques* in the woods along the Seine at Sèvres. And after a time as the dull glow of her memories took fire, she fell to talking of old Julia Shane herself. But she talked of a Julia Shane who was still a young girl and not the sick old woman who, lying ill in her house among the black mills, was the last link in the chain that held Hattie Tolliver from her children.

And as Madame Gigon talked on and on to the accompaniment of the distant sounds from the misty river, there swept over Ellen a consciousness, new but unmistakable, of a delicate unity running through all of life. It was bound together, somehow, in an intricate web composed of such things as love and memories, hopes and sorrows and sentiment, but it was a web without pattern, without design, a senseless, crazy and beautiful thing. She saw then that she could never exist apart, in isolation, from all these others; there were filaments which bound her even to so remote and insubstantial a creature as this blind old woman. It was the web which made her uneasy. She must be free of it, somewhere, sometime. . . .

Criquette began to wheeze and Madame Gigon prodding him with her toe said, "Heigh-ho! . . . We must go to bed. . . . Even the dogs have begun to snore."

AT the end of the week Lily returned from the south, wrapped in furs and shivering in the damp of Paris. She was a warm, sensuous creature who loved the sun and traveled north or south according to the variations in temperature. Even on the Riviera she was not content and, on the occasion of a mistral, she had been known to pack her bag and embark into Italy for Capri or Taormina where the sun was brighter and the flowers more fragrant.

She arrived early in the morning in company with the Baron, Madame Gigon's nephew, and together they came upon Ellen, not yet fallen into the luxurious habits of the French, having breakfast alone in the dining room with Jean, who sat across the table from her plying her all the while with questions about his grandmère and about America and the Town where his mother was born. She was describing it to him. . . .

"It is not a nice Town. . . . It is full of big Mills and furnaces and the soot blackens everything. . . . There's nothing pretty in the Town . . . nothing in the whole place half as pretty as your garden. . . . Your grandmother had a garden once, that was as pretty as this one but it's all dead now. The smok-killed it. . . ."

Here Jean interrupted her to say, "I know! . . . I know! . . . Maman has a friend . . . a Monsieur Schneidermann who owns Mills like that. Once when we were up north, we stopped at a town called Saarbrücken and saw the furnaces. . . . It was a long time ago when I was only seven . . . but I remember. . . ." He became silent and thoughtful for a time and then, looking at her wistfully, he added, "I'd like to go to that Town . . . I'd like to see my grandmère. . . . But Maman says I can't go . . . at least until I'm grown up . . . I suppose grandmère will be dead by then. . . . She's an old, old woman. . . ."

"But she's not so old as Madame Gigon. . . . Think of it,

Madame Gigon taught your grandmother in school when she was a young girl. . . ."

She wanted by some means to escape from the subject of the Town. She could not, of course, tell the boy why he could never visit the Town; she could not tell him there were scores of old women who had been waiting for years just to know for certain that he existed at all. She could tell him about the smoke and filth, but she could not explain to him the nasty character of those women.

"I'm going to England to school in the autumn," the boy said. "Maman has arranged everything. . . . I'll like that better than going to school here. . . . Perhaps grandmère might come to visit us some time."

"She might . . ." replied Ellen, "but she's very ill. . . . My mother is taking care of her now. You see, my mother lives in the Town. She's your mother's cousin . . . her real first cousin. That's how it comes that I'm your cousin."

"And your mother? What is she like?" asked the boy.

For an instant Ellen observed him thoughtfully. "She's not a bit like your mother . . . and yet she's like her too in some ways."

She did not finish the description, for at that moment, through the long vista of the rooms, she saw moving toward her Lily and a man who carried a handbag and across his arm a steamer rug. As they came in, Jean sprang from his chair and ran toward them, clasping his mother about the waist and kissing her as she leaned toward him.

"Maman has come back! Maman has come back!" he cried over and over again, and then, "I have a new cousin! I have a new cousin!"

The man laughed and Lily, smiling, bade the boy be quiet, turning at the same time to Ellen, whom she embraced, to say, "So you've come at last! I hope you're going to stay a long time."

It was the same Lily, a shade older, a shade less slender, but

still warm, lovable, disarming. As they embraced, the faint scent of mimosa drifted toward Ellen and the odor raised a swift, clear picture of the drawing-room at Shane's Castle with all the family assembled on Christmas day . . . the last Christmas day they ever came together there. Old Jacob Barr was dead now. Ellen and Lily were in Paris, Fergus in New York. The drawing room was shut up and abovestairs in her vast bedroom Julia Shane herself, cared for by the capable Hattie, lay dying. In a few more years there would be none of the family left in the Town. They would be scattered over the world. It remained only for grandmère to die.

All this passed through Ellen's mind as she spoke, "Yes, I shall stay a long time . . . if you will have me." She turned away. "I had to come," she said. "There was nothing left to do. . . . But I'm sorry I brought you back from the south."

"And this," said Lily, "is Monsieur Carrière . . . César. He is the nephew of Madame Gigon and a great friend of Jean and me."

The stranger bowed and murmured, "Enchanté," adding in English, "You are the musician . . . Madame Shane expects you one day to be great."

He was a swarthy man, rather handsome with sharply cut features and fierce mustachios, a Colonel of the Cuirassiers who had most of his time free. He smiled pleasantly, yet underneath the smile there was a hint of hostility, a mere spark which, however, struck a response in the breast of Ellen. It was on her side, perhaps, a resentment of his arrogance, of the very assurance with which he conducted himself. It was as if he welcomed her to his own house. And it may have been that for reasons of his own he resented her presence. She too, was arrogant and assured, even though she said pleasantly enough, "If you will have me." Underneath all that false humility, there ran a vein of domination, a strength which one less good-natured and indolent than Lily could discern at once. Still Lily had told him, long ago, that he would not like her cousin. . . .

They were a handsome pair, Lily and the Baron, the one so blonde and voluptuous, the other so dark, so brusque, so like a bit of fine steel. There was about him a sense of something familiar, which tormented the dim recesses of Ellen's memory.

"Well! Well!" he said, throwing down the coats and bags. "Let's have some breakfast." And with the same proprietary air he moved across and rang for the maid and ordered chocolate and rolls for himself and Lily.

When they had gone at last into the drawing-room and Madame Gigon, groping her way down the long stairs, and followed by the two fat dogs, had come in, Ellen understood what it was she had recognized at once in the swarthy Monsieur Carrière. It was nothing that had to do with his appearance; it was far more subtle and complicated than that. It was his manner, the very intonation of his voice when he spoke either to Ellen or Lily herself. He approached them, for all his smooth politeness, as if they were, in the final analysis, creatures inferior to himself, creatures who should be delighted to grant his every whim. With Lily, so good-natured, so generous, he may have been right: with her cousin it was as Mrs. Callendar used to say, "*autres choses.*" The girl bristled with subdued anger. As they sat there, the three of them, smoking before the bright fire, she knew they were destined to hate each other.

Yet it was this very quality, so hauntingly familiar, that reminded her of Richard Callendar. He had not asked her if she loved him; he had taken it simply for granted that she should do as he wished. The memory, in spite of everything, made her miserable. She heard his voice again, more gentle and soft than the voice of the Baron, and saw his hands, fascinating and persuasive.

He was somewhere in this same damp white city on his wedding journey with Sabine.

Presently the Baron observed with a brusque, important air that he must be off; Madame Gigon summoned Jean to the school-

room for his lesson, and the two cousins were left alone. Before the others they had carried on a sort of made-up conversation, suitable for the ears of strangers, and neither had spoken honestly nor fully. As Madame Gigon, guided by Jean and followed by the waddling dogs, disappeared round the corner of the stairs, Lily took off her hat and observed, "Well, now I suppose we can have a long . . . long talk. Come up to my room where we'll be alone."

The family, again after so long a time, asserted itself.

It was a large room, closely resembling the one in which Madame Gigon had placed Ellen, save that it was even more luxurious and smelled faintly of scents and powders. There was a canopied bed and on the wall hung reproductions of four drawings by Watteau. It was not until Lily had removed her corsets and, clad in a peignoir of lace, had flung herself down on the bed that the sense of strain disappeared utterly.

"Sit there on the chaise longue," she said to Ellen, "and let's have a good talk. There's so much to say."

Ellen, stiff and severe in her mourning, sat down by the side of her glowing cousin and Lily, lying back among the pillows, appeared by contrast more lovely, more opulent than she had seemed an hour earlier. To her cousin, so changed since they had last met, so much more indifferent to such matters, there was an air of immorality and sensuousness in the room. Beside Lily she felt as lean, as spirited as a young greyhound.

"You know about Jean," Lily observed casually. "You understand then why I did not insist on your coming to live with me. I was foolish perhaps . . . but when the moment came there was always something which wouldn't let me betray the secret. . . ." She lighted a cigarette and lay back once more among the pillows. "I suppose it *was* a secret," she added, complacently.

"People talked, but no one knew anything."

"No one knows anything here. . . . No one save Madame Gigon. They know less here because they haven't so much time

to think of other people's affairs." Slowly a smile crept over her face, from the rosy mouth up to the violet eyes. "Ah, wouldn't they like to know in the Town?" But her voice was bitter.

Ellen smiled again. "It makes no difference. They say what they want to believe anyway. . . . They said that I ran away with Clarence because I was going to have a baby . . . and I've never had it yet. It's been a long while coming."

"I wanted you to come . . . always, but I was too lazy ever to come to the point. You can stay as long as you like and do as you please. This is a big house. . . . You need never see the rest of us if you don't care to." She spoke with the carelessness of one who was fabulously rich; there was a certain medieval splendor in her generosity. Ellen smiled again.

"Why do you smile?" her cousin asked.

"I was thinking that all this money comes out of the Town . . . the same dirty old Town."

"There's satisfaction in that . . . to think that people like Judge Weissmann are paying us rent."

It was extraordinary how clearly the Town rose up before them. The thousands of miles which lay between made no difference. They belonged to the Town still, by a thousand ties. They were, each in her own way, American. All the years that Lily had lived in Paris could not alter the fact. She was extravagant as Americans are extravagant, content to live abroad forever as Americans are content to do. Yet all her wealth came out of America, out of the very factories in the dirty Town which they both despised. It was perhaps the Scotch blood in them that made them content wherever they saw fit to settle. In a strange country they would not, as the English do, strive to bring their native land with them; they would simply create a new world of their own. Their people have done it everywhere . . . in St. Petersburg, in Constantinople, in Paris, in the Argentine and on the frontiers of Africa.

"And your husband," began Lily. "Tell me about him. . . .

I met him once, you know, coming out on the train to the West. He was going then to see a girl called . . ." She frowned slightly. "I've forgotten her name. . . ."

"Seton," murmured Ellen. "May Seton." Lily was rousing memories now, which seemed far away and yet were faintly painful.

"Seton! That was it! . . . I'd never heard of them and it seemed to hurt him. I wrote you when I heard of his death. The letter must have passed you."

"I never got it . . . perhaps it'll be forwarded."

"Had he been ill long?" She must have wondered at the look in Ellen's eyes. It was not a look of sorrow or desolation; rather it was a look of numb pain.

"He hadn't been ill at all." The girl frowned suddenly and looked out of the window. "All the same," she continued, "you might have said he had been ill for a long time." Then she rose and stood before the small panes looking out into the wet garden. "I've got to tell some one," she said with an air of desperation. "You see . . ." And her voice became barely audible. "You see . . . He killed himself."

The veil was torn away now. Between them there remained no barrier. Each had made her confession, Lily concerning the child, Ellen concerning her husband, and in the torrent of emotion which engulfed them Lily sat up and drew her cousin down to the bed beside her. They both wept and each (with as little real cause) pitied herself.

Ellen told her story, punctuated by sobs, from the beginning. She confessed that she had never had any love for Clarence. She spoke of many things which, at the time of the tragedy, were not clear to her and which she had come to understand later during the hours of solitude on windswept decks. In the emotion of the moment she understood the whole affair even more clearly. She told Lily that she had tried, valiantly, to make Clarence happy. She had done her best to preserve his happiness

and her own at the same time. There had come a time when this was no longer possible.

"Perhaps," she said, when her sobbing had quieted a little, "it is not possible for two people to be completely happy together."

If she had spoken all that was in her mind, she would have added, "When one of them is ambitious and a genius." But this would have been preposterous because there was then no proof of such a thing. Another chapter of the tale she chose not to reveal. In all her torrent of sobbing and talk she never mentioned the name of Callendar.

When they had become more quiet, Lily kissed her and said, "You have been too unhappy. You must stay now with me . . . forever, if you like. You must study and become a great musician. I am rich. I can help you. . . . If you won't take the money, you can borrow it from me and pay me back when you are successful and famous. . . ."

Lily rose languidly and brought a bottle of cologne and they both bathed their eyes. All the strangeness was gone now. Their tears, in the way of women, had brought them close to each other. The sun had come out and the little park was filled by its slanting rays. Belowstairs one of the tall windows opened and they heard on the gravel of the terrace the slow steps of blind Madame Gigon who, wrapped in an antiquated coat of fur and followed by the dogs, was moving up and down in the unaccustomed warmth. There was something in the sound which, as they listened, filled the room with the atmosphere of a conspiracy. For an instant the current of kinship ran swift and high, as high indeed as it had run in the old days when all the clan assembled for the annual feast at Shane's Castle.

"She is growing feeble," observed Lily. "Think of it. She's eighty-five."

Life was short. Only a little time before Madame Gigon had been a young widow come to the school of Mademoiselle Violet de Faux to teach, among others, an awkward young American called Julia Shane.

When Ellen had gone to her own room, she sat for a time before the fire, thinking, and slowly the face which she saw reflected in the dim old mirror began, though it was quite alone in the room, to smile back at her. It had not been difficult. It was all done now. The future was certain. She had gotten what was necessary, without asking for it; in some inexplicable fashion, quite without any planning, it had happened. She had not even been forced to say that all she had in the world were the seven francs that lay in the sunlight on the Louis Quinze console.

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In this one fleeting instant life had been briefly a perfect and exquisite thing. In the great house, surrounded by beauty, by warmth and friendliness, the past and, even for a time, the future did not exist. It was a moment which could not have endured; with such a person as Ellen a moment of that sort might have been called a miracle to have happened at all. As the months passed the very comfort which surrounded her degenerated into a sort of dulness. After a time, Lily returned to her beloved south and there remained in the house only Ellen, Madame Gigon and Jean. The endless talk of Lily's guardian, which in the beginning had seemed vaguely diverting, became in the end merely the garrulity of a childish old woman. But there were worse things to bear.

She soon discovered that Lily, in her indifference, had virtually given over the house to Madame Gigon, and the old woman, poverty-stricken until Lily appeared on her horizon in need of a companion and watchdog, now used it to make up for all the years she had spent alone in a single room in a Versailles pension. Her friends were coming and going constantly, at the most inconvenient times, an endless procession of dowdy widows and spinsters. It was their habit to fortify themselves in the great drawing-room at just the moment chosen by Ellen for her practising. This they

did with an air of the utmost assurance, as if their great age in some fashion gave them precedence over all else in this world. Thus they would sit for hours talking volubly in a tongue which so far as Ellen was concerned might have been Greek or Roumanian. But gradually as she came to understand a word here and there, the mystery surrounding their impassioned conversation was dissipated, and out of the fog there emerged the prosaic fact that their excitement had no foundation. They became as wild over the price of cheese or the health of Criquelette as if they had been engaged in a battle to preserve *la gloire de la patrie*. Yet they were all rich; the very fingers which they shook so violently in the excess of their excitement glittered with diamonds and emeralds. And presently, as her knowledge of French increased, Ellen came to the dismal realization that the bulk of their talk was concerned with gossip. Gathered in a cluster about the blind old woman, they tore reputations as they might have torn cheese cloth. The words "maîtresse" and "intrigue" leapt from the conference a score of times within a single afternoon. Heads wagged and crêpe flowed, (for all of them were so old that they were perpetually in mourning for a husband or a brother or sister; indeed, they went beyond this and mourned darkly the demise of the most remote cousins). Madame de Cyon, the youngest of the lot and the one whom Mrs. Callendar had mentioned so long ago, had a way of narrowing her green eyes and saying, "Tiens! Tiens!" over some choice morsel, with an air of sniffing a bad smell. There were times when Ellen felt that if she said "Tiens! Tiens!" another time she would strangle her. Madame de Cyon was Russian but no better than the rest. They were all, Ellen came to understand, like the women of the Town; they visited Madame Gigon because she was blind and did not go out, and the remainder of their time, it seemed, was spent in collecting morsels for the delectation of the old woman.

There was but one thing which diverted the stream of their gossip and this was the mention of the sacred name of Bonaparte.

She gathered, after a time, that there was a Prince Bonaparte in whom the existence of all of them had found its core. She learned to her astonishment that they ignored the very existence of the Republic. A tottering old man, the son of a plumber's daughter and a dubious prince who was a homicide (all this she gathered from their talk) was, to them, a shining figure invested with all the glory of the Corsican's golden bees.

At length, when she could bear it no longer, Ellen had a piano brought in and placed in one of the great empty chambers in the gallery above the drawing-room, and there she played for hours in defiance of "le Prince" and his court of old women belowstairs. There were times when the music (especially the compositions of some of the hateful new composers) became so violent that it threatened to drown the gossip of Madame Gigon's cronies. At such moments the blind old woman would raise her sightless eyes toward the ceiling and observe to the others, "That is Madame Shane's cousin. She is a violent woman (*une femme sauvage*). . . . She suffers from an excess of *élan*."

At which Madame de Cyon would wag her head and observe, "Tiens! Tiens! Perhaps if she had a lover it would help! A young widow like that. . . ."

During the long months two things sustained her. One was, of course, the old passion for her music. The other was Jean. As they came to know each other, a warm and touching affection developed between them, for the boy, despite the good manners and the quiet grave charm born of his long association with older people, had in him a spark which the presence of his cousin fanned into a flame. The life he led was, to be sure, of a queer sort . . . a life spent almost entirely within the walls of the beautiful old house with little company save old Madame Gigon, her fat dogs and the fussy music master who came twice a week to give him lessons. It was a somber, quiet life which changed only during the delirious summer months when, in company with

his mother and old Madame Gigon, he went to stay in the country at Germigny l'Evec in the lodge of the park owned by Madame's nephew, the Baron. There he could ride a pony, sometimes alone and sometimes following his mother and the Baron on their long rides at early morning through the damp forest on the opposite bank of the Marne. And there were the farmer's boys for playmates.

But in winter everything was changed. Until his cousin came from America he played alone day after day in the little park dominated by the white pavilion. The fascination of having a cousin . . . a real new cousin . . . seemed likely to endure forever. Indeed the power of the novelty was so great that at times he slyly deserted old Madame Gigon and made his way secretly up the long stairs and along the gallery to sit on the floor outside Ellen's door and listen, breathless, to the flood of music that welled up to fill all the house.

When Ellen took him walking in the Bois she did not, like his mother, walk in an indolent regal fashion; she moved rapidly, quite the way a person ought to walk, and she talked of the people they passed and sometimes even halted beside the pond and threw stones far out into the water.

The boy was, at that time, her only companion for, shut in by her ignorance of French and an incurable dislike for the stringy American students who sometimes sought her acquaintance, she had no opportunity for making friends. Yet she was content to be lonely, for she had always been so, save in two brief moments . . . once when she had been overcome by the presence of Callendar and again when Lily had wept and embraced her. Jean worshiped her without claiming any part of her. He was, in this, like his mother, for Lily, in the wisdom and indolence of her nature, allowed Ellen to go her own way. It may have been that in this grain of wisdom lay the secret of her charm and her power even over the old women who came to gather about Madame Gigon's chair and gossip. They succumbed to her like all the others, like the Baron. . . .

There were times when the presence of César troubled Ellen. During all those months the first hatred she had for him failed to abate; she came to tolerate him, perhaps because she saw that it was necessary just as once it had been necessary to tolerate Mr. Wyck and the Bunces. She must have known that he worked against her. Yet in a strange, abstract fashion, she was able to understand the fascination of his hard and wiry masculinity. It was, of course, a thing which she herself could not have suffered for an instant, but she understood that to Lily it was a necessity. Beyond this point, however, her shrewd mind was unable to penetrate; it was impossible to fix the relationship of the pair. Lily never spoke of him, save in the most casual fashion. Indeed, Ellen, who could not bring herself to pry into such matters, never knew whether the Baron had been at Nice with her cousin or whether he had met her at the railway station. Madame Gigon spoke of him as her devoted nephew. She praised his virtues, and his constant presence at the house she interpreted as an interest in herself. At times Ellen could have cried out, "Rot! It's not your nephew who's supporting you and making you comfortable. It's Lily. And it's not you that he comes to see. It's Lily."

But she said nothing. The strangest thing of all was that she did not much care what their relationship might be. Once it might have disturbed her; now she looked upon it as a matter of no concern, a thing which had nothing to do with her. Yet there were moments in the evenings when, sitting with them in the long drawing-room, she felt vague, faint envy of her cousin. They came in the long silences when she would suddenly discover that Lily, so happy, so radiant, so lovely, in the long gowns of black velvet which she wore in the evening, was watching the Baron as he sat smoking his pipe, his feet stretched out before him toward the fire. The dogs adored him. He was the one person for whom they would desert Madame Gigon.

It was then that Ellen became conscious of her loneliness as a distant, almost physical pain. She learned to kill the pain.

Usually she rose, lighted a cigarette, and sitting at the piano, fell to playing wild and boisterous music out of the music halls.

Miss Rebecca Schönberg did not abandon her. She came once or twice to the house, where her bright shiny eyes penetrated every corner. She inspected, absorbed Madame Gigon and, having exhausted the possibilities of the old woman, put her forever out of her mind. She would, no doubt, have found marvelous material in Lily and the Baron but, as chance had it, they were never present. She took Ellen with her to the theater and twice to the opera, once to hear the inevitable Louise and once to hear *Götterdämmerung*, with all the guttural power of its German diction ironed out into smooth, elegant French. They called it *Le Crêpuscule des Dieux*, a whimsy which caused Ellen endless mirth. And at the end of two months, the restless Jewess having placed Ellen with an excellent teacher of French, left the Ritz and set out to visit an aunt who was married to a rich Gentile merchant in Riga.

But before she left she said to Ellen, "When I return we will arrange some entertainments. You must know the right people. That is vastly important. You must be modern, because during the next ten years to be modern will be to be chic."

It occurred to Ellen that Miss Schönberg, with remarkable speed, had undertaken the position of guide and messenger toward the heights of success. She was like a trainer who had taken in charge a new animal to teach it a whole set of tricks. She did not protest, because Rebecca Schönberg did not annoy her; on the contrary she was vastly amusing. In her restless energy there was a quality akin to the vitality of Ellen herself. They went everywhere; they saw everything; they absorbed the people about them, and returned late at night as fresh as they had started.

"Vitality," observed Rebecca, as they lunched at the Ritz on the day she left for Riga, "is nine-tenths of success. With one grain of genius and nine of vitality, any one can succeed."

As she made this observation, she regarded Ellen with an in-

tense and speculative scrutiny. The girl was looking about her with a naïve interest in the people who sat near them. Her whole manner was one of a vast wonder, as if she thought, "I, Ellen Tolliver, lunching at the Ritz in Paris. It is not possible that I am awake!" Miss Schönberg must have seen that she was still a bit crude, still not quite free of the multitude, but she had an unmistakable air, a certain distinction born in her which had to do with the superb poise of the head, the slight arch of the nose and the line of the throat. It had been sharpened and polished mysteriously during the few months in Paris. The clothes were right for her style . . . simple almost to severity, fitting the tall, strong, energetic body to perfection. They came from dress-makers, Miss Schönberg reflected, who knew their business. Madame Shane must have had taste to have guided the girl so well. A touch here and there and she would be perfect. What she lacked was a sense of the bizarre which the public expected from artists. There was plenty of time to accomplish that. . . .

"As I was saying," continued Miss Schönberg, over her *coupe marron*, "vitality is everything. I once saw Mary Garden at a rehearsal on a stage cluttered by the jumbled scenery of *Pelléas* and *Melisande*. There were scores of people on the stage . . . carpenters, musicians, a director, journalists . . . all alive and moving about, but one didn't see them. One saw only Mary moving back and forth, in and out among them. No one else existed. It was a case of vitality. She is ninety-nine per cent. vitality . . . nothing else. She hypnotizes the public. Why, she has even adapted the French language to suit her own ideas."

The men and women who sat at the adjoining tables must have found them an interesting pair; they were both so neat, so trim, so *raffiné*. It was not without reason that more than one person, in the years that followed, spoke of Ellen as resembling a fine greyhound. The one, it was plain, was a Jewess and very likely, if one could judge from the bright shrewd eyes, a clever one. The other might have been anything . . . Russian,

French, American, Hungarian; it was impossible to say. And she was young and handsome.

"You must exercise," continued Miss Schönberg, "so as not to lose your figure or your vitality."

So after Miss Schönberg had gone, Ellen took up riding, a thing she had not done since the days when, as a wild young girl, she had ridden her grandfather's horses over fences and ditches without a saddle. And in the Bois, as in the Ritz, people came to notice her, that she rode magnificently and was dressed by the best of habit makers. Presently, Lily's friend Paul Schneidermann, who sometimes called at the house in the Rue Raynouard to see young Jean, took to riding with her. He was a languid young man, devoted to the arts, who led a sybaritic life, but he came presently to rise at dawn in order to ride by her side through the dewy park.

In those days, she did not forget her mother; on the contrary she wrote to her more frequently than she had ever done, and her letters were real letters, filled with the details of her progress. She wrote that Sanson had placed her with the proper teachers, that she had been to see the great Philippe and that everything had been arranged for her to work under him. She described Rebecca Schönberg.

Sometimes in the letters that came from the Town, Ellen discerned a note of subdued and passionate jealousy which had, somehow, taken the place of her mother's old distrust of Lily. She understood all that well enough; Hattie Tolliver hated Lily for giving her daughter all those things which she had herself desired so earnestly to give. But there was in Hattie's letters no sense of remoteness, not the faintest note of her having yielded the possession of her daughter. She treated Ellen still as a little girl. She saw her still as she had seen her on that last afternoon, a stiff, proud, awkward girl carrying her skates as she stepped through the door of the Tolliver house into the bright sunlight on her way to Walker's Pond.

It was the death of old Julia Shane which set in motion the next event of importance to the Tollivers. Things happened like that in their family. For a time all would go forward, much as a wave moving in a great smooth swell approaches a reef, until presently some event interrupted and the courses of their lives had all to be redirected. The old woman was, perhaps, the center, the one who at that moment held all the skeins in her withered bony fingers. She chose at last to die, and so brought Lily back to the Town and freed her niece, the faithful Hattie.

Together they cared for old Julia; together they sat by the side of her bed and slowly, under the circumstances, being so close to death, there grew up between them a new and unaccustomed affection. It was Lily herself who, a day or two before her mother died, told Hattie that the old story about her having had a child was true. The existence of Jean shocked Mrs. Tolliver less than might have been expected, less even than she herself had expected it to do, perhaps because always deep in her heart she was certain that Lily had had a child born out of wedlock. It was old gossip, which she had endeavored always to crush, yet it was gossip which she knew had its foundations in truth. She knew it, always, just as she knew the days when it was certain to rain or to be windy. She could not have explained the feeling, save that she had always distrusted Lily's charm. One could not be like Lily and still be a good woman. . . .

For the sake of morality, she made known with an acute frankness her disapproval of such conduct, and when this had been done in conscientious fashion she came to the subject nearest to her heart, the question which interested her more profoundly at that moment than anything in the world.

It happened a day or two after the funeral when the old Julia, dressed for the last time in her mauve taffeta, was borne through the Flats past Mills made silent by the long awaited strike. up

to the bleak hill where they buried her by the side of her brother-in-law, Jacob Barr, the pioneer.

The two cousins, Lily and Hattie, sat together in the gloomy drawing-room before a fire of cannel coal, surrounded by pictures which stood in piles against the wall and rosewood furniture wrapped in ghostly cheesecloth. Shane's Castle, they both knew sadly, would no longer be a source of talk and excitement for the Town. Harvey Seton need no longer view it distantly with all the cold horror of a Calvinist. Its history was ended; there would never be within its walls another gathering of the clan.

The gentle melancholy which filled the old house had, it seemed, an effect upon the two women. Lily, clad in a loose gown of black velvet, sat watching her cousin with a curious look of speculation. She was as lovely as she had always been, so lovely, so gentle, so amiable that the Spartan Hattie in heart could not believe that she had changed her scandalous way of living. The older woman was, as usual, busy; it was as if her tireless fingers could cease only in sleep or in death. She sat now mending a bit of old lace which they had found while ransacking the vast attics of Shane's Castle.

"I will mend it and send it to Ellen," she said. "It is fine lace, better than anything she will be able to get in Paris."

- Lily smiled, perhaps because Hattie thought so little of Paris and the laces it might offer, perhaps because it seemed to her that lace was so wildly inappropriate to Ellen. What was lace to a creature so proud and fierce, so ruthless? For she had discovered what the others had not known and what Hattie, even in the moments when her daughter hurt her most savagely, would never believe—that Ellen *was* ruthless.

"I am trusting you," she murmured over the lace, "to look out for Ellen. She is young and even if she is a widow she knows little of the world."

Lily smiled again. She thought, "As if it were possible for any man to seduce Ellen unless she chose to be seduced. She was born knowing the world!"

"Do you think she knows her way about with you away from her?"

Lily leaned forward and touched her cousin's strong, skilful fingers. "Don't fret over Ellen," she said. "Why, Ellen is safer in Paris than I am. Nothing can ever happen to Ellen. . . ." She bent her head and the warm color came into her cheeks. "I mean nothing of the sort that could happen to me. Why, Ellen's complete. . . . You don't understand how independent she is. She could go into the middle of Africa and land on her feet. She has no need of friends or guardians. Why, she's never even homesick."

Hattie's fingers paused in their work. "Never?" she asked in a low voice. "Never?"

And Lily, understanding that she had hurt the proud woman, hastened to add, "Oh, not that she doesn't want to see you all. She speaks of you constantly. . . . She wants some day to have you near her always. . . . You see, now she has to work. . . . I don't think you understand how ambitious she is."

Slowly, as Lily spoke, the cloud passed a little from Mrs. Tolliver. When her cousin had finished, she raised her head and said in a low voice, "Oh, I know all that. I've been thinking about it all lately . . . thinking a great deal. Only I never understood why it was she never came home before she went to you."

"There were reasons," said Lily. "Good reasons. . . . One was that she hadn't the money and wouldn't ask you for it. She doesn't know that I discovered that . . . but I did . . . I know just how much money she had. When she came to me, there were only seven francs left. . . . D'you know how much that is? It's a little more than a dollar. That's all she had left. A girl who would take such a risk is not likely to fail. You'll see her famous some day, Hattie. You can be sure of that. You'll be proud of her."

The fingers were busy again with the lace, and Lily knew suddenly that she had hurt Mrs. Tolliver again, this time in quite

a different fashion. She had touched the old pride that had to do with money . . . that curious, hard vein of pride so incomprehensible to Lily who had never thought of money, save only as something that was always at hand to make the wheels of life run smoothly.

"To think," murmured Mrs. Tolliver, "that there wasn't enough money to bring her home to me." A tear slipping down the worn cheeks dropped into the web of old lace and Lily hastened to speak.

"It wasn't only that," she said. "Money would have made little difference. She couldn't have come back. . . . She didn't dare to come. You see, she was discouraged. . . . How can I say it? She told me the whole story. She said that if she had turned back then she would have been lost forever. She would have turned into a pitiful old maid like Eva Barr. She could never have married any one in the Town. There was no one with enough spirit. The ones with spirit . . . enough spirit for her, all leave the Town." Then after a silence: "You see the death of her husband was so tragic. . . . It hurt her."

For a second Mrs. Tolliver raised her head and faced the beautiful cousin. "She never loved him. . . . I know that."

Lily, a little frightened, kept silent for a time. She had come close to betraying the awful secret. "No," she said, presently. "I suppose she didn't love him. He was a creature without spirit . . . a nice man, but no mate for an eagle."

"You knew him?" asked Hattie. "Where? You never told me that."

"I met him on the train . . . the last time I came here. I think," she added with a faint smile, "that he was a little *épris* of me . . . a little taken by me. I know the signs. . . . But he was terribly frightened . . . timid like a rabbit."

And then Mrs. Tolliver came round again to the old observation. "I always said he wasn't good enough for her. I couldn't see why she had anything to do with him."

"Ah," said Lily. "You don't know your own daughter yet . . . Hattie. He helped her to escape."

But she knew that Hattie would never believe such a thing.

It was a strange circumstance that Lily—the Lily whom Hattie had always feared and distrusted—became in those days the one to whom the vigorous woman turned for comfort and companionship. Somehow the indolent Lily, so filled with understanding and knowledge of the world, served as a bond between the mother and the daughter in far off Paris. She succeeded in softening all the wounds made by Ellen in the abrupt notes which came with an efficient regularity, for Lily possessed a great power in such matters; it was a power which had more to do with the sound of her warm, low voice than with any logic in the arguments she used. Her arguments were neither logical nor profound; usually they were only observations as to the shyness of Ellen in all the range of affection, and the fierce ambition that tormented her.

"You will understand some day," she said, "that all she is doing is more for you than for herself. It is because she wants you to be proud of her."

"I don't care about that . . ." Hattie would say over and over again. "Not very much. But I don't want her to escape me forever. I couldn't bear that. She's different from Fergus. He is warm and shows his love. But there are times when I'm afraid I'll lose Ellen forever."

And Lily, in the depths of her placid mysterious soul, knew that here again it was a matter of possession . . . the same possession which the Baron must always have over herself, the possession which Ellen, without willing it, had exercised over poor Clarence. Hattie would not abandon her claim to her children. She could not say to Hattie, without hurting her, that her daughter was a creature whom none had possessed or ever would possess even quietly, secretly, as Lily knew that she possessed the Baron, despite all his boisterous show of domination.

ON a gray winter morning early in the year 1912, the Tolliver family stood on the platform of the Town station, a dirty affair covered with soot and shameful in a community so prosperous. There was no new station because none could be built so long as Shane's Castle stood upon the only site worthy of so grandiose a building as the Town had planned. The old woman was dead but her daughter Lily refused to sell, and Hattie Tolliver, standing now on the platform with the air of a field marshal surrounded by his troops, took satisfaction in this knowledge. Her family was on the retreat now before the onslaught of the Mills and she herself stood in command of the tiny rear guard.

"They'd give a lot for that land," she remarked to her husband. "I hope Lily will keep it. She doesn't need the money."

It was her parting shot at the Town. She stood now, free of it forever, surrounded by her husband, her son Robert and the everlasting Gramp. There was money in her pocket, money which Aunt Julia had left her, and so there were no perils ahead for a little time at least. And in her heart there were no qualms over leaving the place in which she had been born and lived a life filled with petty cares and worries. She regarded it, on the contrary, as a malignant desert from which two of her children had fled as soon as they were able, a pest-hole filled with factories and furnaces which had ruined her husband and forced her into poverty. She left nothing behind her for which she had the faintest affection; for the dog was dead long since of old age. Out of a family whose founder had settled the wilderness on this spot, only one remained . . . the hard and pious Eva Barr. They were all gone, the uncles, the brothers, the cousins, the sisters . . . all of them . . . dead now or gone out into the world.

Of this world, her ideas were still somewhat vague, for she never had been outside the borders of the state: it was perhaps

a great, roaring place full of adventure, or again it might be very much like the county. It really made very little difference; she was free now, with money in her pocket, setting out at last in pursuit of her children.

A little way off, wrapped in a shawl and the coonskin coat, Gramp Tolliver sat peering indifferently through the fog that had settled over the Flats. In the depths of his heart, he respected his enemy. She stood there in command of the party, beside her son and her husband, so self-assured, so utterly fearless of the future. She might have been, he thought, a prophetic, a leader in an Old Testament migration. . . .

Only a week earlier there had been a skirmish between them over the matter of his possessions. Hattie had been for leaving them behind altogether with much of the family stuff; she had been for brushing aside carelessly all his shelves of books, his beloved rocking chair and the ponderous, antiquated desk. He would, she told him, be able to find all the books he wanted in the libraries of so great a city as New York. (As if, indeed, books out of libraries were the same as his own in which he had written along the borders such remarks as "excellent," "penetrating," or "tosh," and "rubbish"!)

Gramp had learned long ago the great power which lay in simple inertia; by taking no course of action, one became the possession of other people. He knew that they could not cast him aside like a piece of old furniture. He was a relative, a father; and one could not abandon a father. So he waited, and when Hattie threatened not to send his books and chair and desk along with him, he had refused to go at all and threatened her wickedly with the awful scandal of staying behind and entering the poorhouse. He knew the keeper well, he said (lying) and there at least they would let him keep his books.

In the end he had won. The desk, the rocking chair, and ten cases of books had been shipped ahead. With those things he would be content. He would be able again to raise his sanctum somewhere among the buildings of New York.

"The train is late," observed Hattie with irritation. "Why is it that it is never on time?"

She spoke with the air of an experienced traveler,—Hattie who had never been outside the state. She begrudged every moment that she stayed in the Town as a moment which kept her out of the future.

Bidding her not to worry and observing that eventually the train would come as all trains did, her husband turned away and began to walk silently up and down the worn bricks of the platform—the same bricks, he remembered, that he had trod on the night he set out upon his futile pursuit of his daughter.

It was one of those moments which occur sometimes between lover and mistress, between husband and wife, between those who have loved each other for years—a moment when it is impossible for the one to tell the other what is in his heart because it is quite beyond understanding. He could not say to her that he was sad because he was leaving so much that he had loved; she, his own wife who loathed it all so deeply, would think him a little mad. He could not say that he was sad because he would never again see the pleasant farms of the county, never again talk with his cronies of the Grand Circuit and quarrel about Pop Geers and how he had driven his latest race. Never again would he have those long arguments over horses in hotel bars and parlors during racing week, never again see the sap running from the trees in maple sugar time, never again talk with old Bayliss and Judge Wilkins about their Guernseys and Shorthorns. He was leaving a world which, despite all the disappointments it had brought him, he loved. There were friends in this world which it pained him to believe that he would never meet again.

He was lonely in a way he had never known until now.

For a moment, at the far end of the platform, the gentle man halted and fell to regarding his wife and his father with a strange and distant expression, as if they were strangers to him. The one was so restless, the other so indifferent. The one had love

only for her children, the other had love for nobody and nothing. No, they could not understand. It was easy for them. . . .

Far off a whistle sounded and he saw his wife hasten for the fifth time to put all the luggage in order and pry old Gramp loose from his throne of indifference upon the baggage truck. At the sight he turned and as he moved, walking slowly toward them over the worn bricks, it occurred to him that it was Ellen whom they were all pursuing and that he was being dragged along with all the others.

He knew then what he had known before—that they would never recapture her. She was gone forever.

From his eminence on the baggage truck old Gramp had been meditating the selfishness of Julia Shane. She had left Hattie a fat sum of money, enough to escape, but she had kept it until she died, allowing Hattie to live for years on the very edge of poverty. Poor Hattie! She never saw the reason; she never understood that the old woman had kept her poor so that she might have her by her side as illness and old age claimed her. It was poverty that gave Julia Shane possession over her niece, and she had guarded the possession until the day her will was read, long after she had grown cold in her grave on the bleak hill above the Town. She was beyond help from Hattie now, and so, when she could keep her niece no longer, she had set her free.

The train screeched over the crossing, through the mills and into the station and Hattie, all agitation and worry now, jarred the old man loose from his meditation and steered him in the direction of their car.

Five minutes passed and the great locomotive with a series of demoniacal snorts pulled the train out of the station into the unknown. It carried an old man, a middle-aged woman, her mild husband and a boy. It was the last time that any of them ever saw the Town that bore the name of Hattie's grandfather.

THE house in Paris to which Sabine and Richard Callendar returned after their honeymoon stood in the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne. It belonged, properly speaking, to Thérèse herself, an enormous florid house of white stone built in the baroque German style which came to dominate the new parts of Paris in the early part of the twentieth century. In all honesty it could be said that Thérèse was not responsible either for its architecture or its decoration; the house came to her in partial payment for the loans she had made a year or two before the mysterious collapse of the international banking firm, Wolff and Simon. It had been the property of Wolff, and Thérèse, examining it one day shortly after the transfer to her possession, decided that it would suit her admirably as a *pied-à-terre* in Paris. Instead of turning it into cash she kept it and used it, unchanged, during her visits.

Wolff, in the heyday of his prosperity (long before he shot himself after fleeing half-way across Europe from such tender creditors as Thérèse) had fancied himself as a collector of art. The house remained as a monument to his bad judgment in this matter; in a German fashion he had absorbed quantities of sentimental pictures and rococo bronzes that hung or stood on marble pedestals between enormous second-rate tapestries. All pieces of any value had vanished long ago when Wolff, in a frantic effort to save the collapse of his firm, had summoned a dealer who stripped the place of its Degas, its Rodins, and even the Seurat and the Rousseau which a mistress had led Wolff into buying against his will because she thought it chic to "buy moderns." All that remained were remnants, grandiose, vulgar and sentimental, among which Thérèse Callendar moved and lived with as great an indifference as she displayed toward the solid house on Murray Hill. The vast mass of marble and tapestry satisfied, it seemed, an Oriental longing for pomp and splendor. All that was Greek in her and much that was

French exulted in this phantasmagoria of marble, red plush and mirrors.

The house depressed Sabine from the very moment she crossed the threshold and beheld with a shudder the expanse of tessellated floor, the red plush stair rail and the drawing-room beyond with its modern gilt furniture set upon an authentic Savonnerie beneath sentimental German pictures of the Dresden school. Unlike her mother-in-law she had an Anglo-Saxon feeling that a home should be a place in which one was surrounded by warm and beautiful things. To Thérèse Callendar a house was a house. She owned houses in London, New York, Paris and Constantinople. A house was simply four walls within which one found rich food and soft beds during the brief weeks between journeys from one capital to another; and so the houses she possessed, like the one in the Avenue du Bois and the one on Murray Hill, came to have the indifferent air of great caravanseries. The only rooms which might have attained the dignity of the word "home" were those occupied by the concierges and the caretakers.

It was in this house, after the turbulence of her honeymoon, that Sabine found the time to analyze, with all her passion for such things, the exact character of her position. The process began during the first week when her husband, a little gruff over her dislike for the place, left her a great deal in solitude. She found that he expected her, during the day, to amuse herself; at night he was devoted enough, but the days clearly were to be his to be spent among his friends of the Jockey Club and elsewhere. The afternoons she passed languidly in a sitting room which adjourned their bed-chamber and had once served as a boudoir for the same mistress who led Wolff into buying a Seurat.

Sabine understood perfectly the character of the room; indeed, she found amusement in reconstructing from the evidence furnished by the atrocious house, the character and history of the suicide

banker; and, though she never knew it, she came miraculously close to the truth.

The former boudoir had a marble floor on which were spread a tiger skin from India and a white bearskin from Siberia. There were mirrors on every side; the lady who had once occupied the room could not have turned her head without encountering a dozen reflections of her pink voluptuous body. (Wolff, being a German and a Jew, was certain to choose that sort of mistress.) The walls were covered with black satin on which had been painted a Parisian decorator's version of Tokyo in cherry blossom time. The chaise longue, fashioned like an Egyptian couch with carved lions' heads at both ends, stood almost hidden beneath great piles of cushions of fanciful design and color . . . mauve, yellow, green, crimson and black, all decorated with a profusion of tassels and gold lace. Lying upon it Sabine gazed at her innumerable reflections and thought that being a lady was much more satisfactory than being a demi-mondaine; only to laugh aloud the very next moment at the picture of her mother-in-law in respectable black satin and jet moving complacently about amid such vulgar and guilty splendor.

But all her thoughts were not amusing ones. For a bride, they were remarkably cynical and disillusioned. She was troubled by the change which had come over Callendar since their marriage . . . a change of which she had become aware almost at the moment she turned away from the altar of St. Bart's. Being the wife of Richard Callendar, she understood, was not the same as being his friend. This new relationship had altered everything. As a friend she might have found him satisfactory until the day of her death; as a husband . . . she did not know. She was puzzled. It seemed to her that in gaining a husband, she had lost a friend.

She understood, quite coldly and without conceit, that she was much more clever than most women of her age. She was

not silly; she had few illusions. Nor was she, perhaps, romantic; though of this she could not be so certain.

It puzzled her that in becoming the wife of Richard Callendar, she had forfeited so quickly the old understanding, the habit they had of exchanging jests and of mocking people in the manner of naughty school children. She had tried from the first to revive the old intimacy, but when he failed to respond to her sallies and regarded her with a queer look of disapproval, she had grown depressed. It was as if the new intimacy, so intensely physical with a man like Callendar, had killed the old; as if by becoming his wife she had attained a position immeasurably remote from that of his friend.

Would he, she wondered, treat a mistress in this fashion, as if she were an institution? And an institution over which he had complete authority?

It was not that she thought him in love with her. Reflecting now with some bitterness, she knew why he had married her. From his point of view, the time had come for him to marry; she was suitable, and he must have known that a woman so clear-headed would cause him no difficulties, no scenes, no unpleasantnesses. His mother had desired it because she liked Sabine and because it increased the already vast fortune for which she cared so tenderly. Lately, when they dined out together, she had come to understand even more—that he had perhaps chosen her because she made the best of herself, because she was a woman of spirit who, on entering a room, made an impression. There was in Callendar a strange sort of vanity which demanded satisfaction, a vanity which was, perhaps, another and a masculine manifestation of his mother's passionate sense of property. It would have been impossible for him to have married a woman, no matter how pretty she might have been, who was simply commonplace, sweet and insipid. He demanded in his wife an element of the spectacular. He had devoted himself to the tawny Lorna Vale,

to the black and glittering Mrs. Sigourney, and to that strange, uncivilized musician from the middle west. About them all, there had been a spectacular quality, an undercurrent of fierce vitality, of outward distinction from the mob which appeared to have fascinated him.

She did not flatter herself that he had married her through desire; yet from the moment of their marriage he had been passionate after a fashion which shocked her. It was confusing to find that a man who was so polite and indifferent, so free from the little tendernesses which, to be honest, she had never expected, could at times display a passion so fierce and unexpected. It was as if in some way, love, passion, desire—she could not in his case define it precisely—were isolated, a thing apart.

There were reasons enough why she had married him. He was a great match; women would have desired him even if he had not been rich. And, she reflected with astonishing coldness, to have won him in the face of so much competition was a triumph worth paying for with much unhappiness. It was a victory over women who hated her and had sought with all the bag of their nasty feminine tricks to outwit her. She had married him too because she had come very nearly to the conclusion that she could never fall passionately in love with any man and that, therefore, it was far better to choose an interesting husband than a dull one. It was impossible, she felt, for love to survive such a passion as hers for dissection and analysis; love could not stand being pinned down and pulled apart. She did not then expect great love, and for the rest of it, Callendar had fascinated her as no other man had ever done, because he had always eluded her, just as he was eluding her now that he was her husband. In a sense, he offered her material vigorous enough to last a lifetime.

More than once in the midst of such reflections there returned to her the memory of the night when the raw young creature, whom she now thought of as "that musician," had fainted. She

remembered how, on this occasion, she had regarded Callendar minutely as he stood, his hands clenching the back of a chair, watching the naked Burmese dancer swaying to the insidious rhythm of tom-tom and flageolet. She remembered how the dancer and the barbaric music had shocked her a little as being wildly out of place in the big stuffy drawing-room. It was music which to her meant very little save that it was mildly exciting. Upon Callendar and his mother it had produced the most astonishing effect. Could it be that in this lay the clue alike to his fascination and to her failure to fathom that obscure thing which people called his soul? Though he had been her husband, even her lover, for a long time, she knew him no better than she had known him on the night of his mother's absurd soirée.

And lying in that preposterous boudoir that had once belonged to the mistress of Wolff, she found herself admitting that slowly and certainly he was gaining complete possession of her imagination. It troubled her because she valued above all else in the world her own aloofness; so long as she did not lose her sense of being a spectator, no one could hurt her, not even her own husband. It troubled her too because she could not be certain whether this new interest had any relation to love or whether it had its roots in a sort of perverse attraction, fundamentally intellectual in quality . . . an attraction which carried an element of the sensual hitherto entirely foreign to her nature. Day after day she found herself smiling over the thought that this sensual attraction should have been a little shocking and was not. In one sense he had overwhelmed her. He was a cruel, a passionate lover. If she had been less intelligent, more innocent, more sentimental, he might have wounded her very soul; but the curse which made romantic love impossible also saved her. Never, for more than a passing moment, had he been able to dissipate her awful awareness.

He had come to her, after all, from Lorna Vale, from Mrs. Sigourney, perhaps even from that American girl (though of this

she could not be certain) and, doubtless, from many other women. So much experience, she understood, made him dangerous to any woman possessed of curiosity.

During those first weeks in Paris, it amazed Sabine to find that her husband knew so few of his own countrymen; he told her that most Americans who chose to live in Paris were either silly or depraved and so revealed for the first time the fact that he did not consider himself American. He became sulky when she asked him to dine with a school friend of hers whose husband chose to live in Paris.

"I know her husband," he answered in contempt. "He is an ass who tries to live like the French. He's not a Frenchman. His money comes out of a New England shoe factory."

But he went all the same, perhaps because she managed to convey to him without saying it, that he was neglecting her. During the day she spent a great deal of time with friends and acquaintances, mostly women who had married foreigners of one sort or another. In their company she went from shop to shop buying an endless number of clothes. The same taste which caused her to shudder at the monstrous house in the Avenue du Bois led her to love clothes passionately. She knew too that beautiful clothes satisfied the strain of vanity in her husband which demanded a wife who was dressed with taste and distinction. She had begun already to plan how she might attract and keep him.

One evening, while they were dressing for the Opera, he said to her as she came out of the boudoir and faced him, "It is true what Jacques said at the club to-day. It takes the Parisian to make the clothes and the American to wear them. The Americans are the best dressed women in the world."

And he looked at her in such a way that she grew warm suddenly in the knowledge that her figure was superb, that her shoulders were marvelously white and beautiful, and that her clothes were perfect. Until lately she had dressed, like most American women, for the sake of other women; now she under-

stood that, without knowing it, she had been dressing of late to please a man, because she had found one who understood the beauty and importance of clothes. There was, despite all her other doubts, great satisfaction in that.

She discovered too that his friends were not among the Americans and the English but among the French and the Russians. She found herself, night after night, at dinners watching him as he stood, straight, dark and handsome, his queer gray eyes wrinkled a little with laughter, talking to some friend who was a foreigner, and at such moments she was aware of his great difference from her own people. He was, in some obscure fashion, linked with that preposterous boudoir and its florid decorations. Perhaps, secretly, he really liked the awful house as much as his mother liked it.

She saw too, with the green eyes which took in everything, that the women about her were intensely conscious of him, and she knew then that she had been at the same time lucky and tragically unlucky. It would be so easy for him . . . a man of so much intelligence and a beauty like that of a fine animal.

Toward the end of the first winter, a day or two after she had made certain that she was to have a baby, she interrupted her shopping long enough to have lunch at the Ritz. She had a table, alone, in one corner of the big room and, having no one to talk with her, she fell to observing the types at the other tables and reflecting upon the vulgarity and self-conscious glitter which marked the patrons of such hotels the world over. So she was startled when she found that the personality of some one who entered the room at that moment had the power of distracting her.

Two women came in together and stood for a time surveying the room. The one (it was she who was disturbing) was tall, slender and handsome, dressed smartly in a black suit with a black fur. The other, plainly a Jewess (who understood perfectly the manipulation of head-waiters) was small, with a ferrety,

good-natured face and an energetic, chattering manner. They took a table at a little distance so that Sabine was able to watch them.

In the beginning, as she realized that there was some reason for her having noticed the pair, she became aware of a sense of familiarity in the taller woman. Then, as she watched them, the reason became quite clear. It was the American girl . . . the musician, in Paris and in the Ritz of all places, and no longer dowdy but handsomely dressed!

By long established precedent, Sabine made no move toward approaching the newcomer. It was her habit to avoid involving herself with too many people; such a course made life far too tiresome and complicated. She had known the girl well enough, but there was no point now in renewing the acquaintance; indeed, it seemed idiotic even to consider the idea. Vaguely, she reflected, it was a good idea to leave what was well enough alone.

But the old, insatiable curiosity had been aroused; she found herself puzzled as to the presence of Ellen . . . (Tolliver, that was her name) . . . in Paris. She had been poor. She had been, she told Sabine during those stark conversations in the house on Murray Hill, hindered by a hundred obstacles. Yet here she was, in Paris, dressed handsomely in clothes which the appraising eye of Sabine told her had come from one of the best establishments, probably Worth or Chanel. Sabine was curious too regarding the whereabouts of the husband . . . the husband whom she had once mistaken very stupidly for the girl's lover. And slowly, in the midst of the noisy room filled with a fantastic assortment of people, there rose in her memory a picture of that vulgar apartment the Babylon Arms, and a glimpse as they opened the door of the tiny top floor flat, of a mild little man in shirt sleeves. What had become of him?

She remembered too the confidences which she had exchanged with her mother-in-law in the days when the young musician seemed so near to upsetting their carefully laid plans. Mrs.

Callendar had mentioned the mild little man, saying, "I'm certain the girl doesn't care a fig for him. She's tied to him by pity. That's all. But we can be thankful for him. He stands between her and Richard."

Where was the little man to whom she was tied by pity?

Any one noticing Sabine as she made ready to leave the dining room might easily have taken her for an adventuress. She drew her veil over her face and holding her fur almost up to her eyes, she hastened out, taking care on the way that her back was toward the tall girl and the busy little Jewess. In the battle between an overwhelming curiosity and a vague instinct of fear, it was fear which, unaccountably, won the victory.

As her motor, very small and very expensive, sped away along the Rue de Rivoli and across the white spaces of the Place de la Concorde into the Avenue des Champs Elysées, Sabine succumbed to an inexplicable sense of depression. It occurred to her that she did not really know whether the girl had ever been the mistress of her husband. She could not even be certain that Callendar had ever asked Ellen Tolliver to be his wife. Thérèse Callendar had the word of the girl that there had been nothing; yet with Callendar, it was impossible to know. If he had asked her to marry him, it must have been but a step toward seducing her from her husband, the mild little man. It did not occur to Sabine that with two women a man might be two quite different persons.

The motor sped smoothly along the asphalt past the Elysée Palace, around the Arc de Triomphe and on toward the huge house in the Avenue du Bois.

It might be, she thought, that Callendar himself knew the girl was in Paris. It might even be that he had arranged it for her to be there.

And again Sabine reflected that in her good fortune there was a tragic element of bad luck.

Callendar came in late for tea. She heard the footman speaking to him as he came through the vast hall across the tessellated floor. She waited for him, sitting behind the silver tea things in the small sitting room at the back of the house, and as he entered she was seized again by the disturbing fear of losing herself. He kissed her, casually, and said, "Well, have you had a busy day?"

"Nothing. . . . I went shopping with Madeleine and lunched alone at the Ritz."

She might easily have added, "And whom do you think I saw there?" But she did not. On the contrary, she said, "It's a funny show . . . the Ritz . . . And you? . . . What have you done?"

She did not hear his answer, because her attention was swallowed up by a sharp sense of his presence . . . a vivid image of the dark face and the fine, muscular hand as he raised his silk kerchief in a familiar gesture to stroke his mustaches. In the back of her mind a small voice told her that it was perilous and awful to have such emotions.

She poured his tea but he did not drink it.

"I'll have a glass of port," was his reply. And then, "I had luck to-day. I won eleven thousand francs at baccarat . . . playing with Henri and Posselt, the Russian."

"Good," was her reply, and again it was not what she might have said. This gambling worried her. It was not that he would bring them to poverty by it; that was almost impossible. But there was in her mind a feeling of disgust at the picture of men spending five hours of daylight in gambling. She tried to reproach herself by the thought that the idea was American and provincial. But she understood why his mother sometimes reproached him for not thinking more of his business. (Always he retorted that she liked business and he did not.)

There was silence and presently Sabine said, "I wonder, Dick, if we can't do something about this house . . . either take one of our own or clear out some of this rubbish."

"It's very comfortable. . . . There's every luxury."

She laughed. "Too much luxury . . . I feel at times like a kept woman. Wolff had it for his mistress . . . I'm sure he did."

Callendar smiled. "That's true," he replied. "Some of it is very bad, but can't we stick it out until spring? We'll go to the country then or to England for a time."

She had spoken of the matter before and the answer had always been the same. She now revived the discussion without hoping for any solution; she wanted to know whether he really liked it, whether he was really linked in some way to the extravagance of that awful boudoir. Watching him as she spoke, she believed that he did.

For a time they smoked in silence and then Sabine, crushing out the ash of her cigarette, observed with a magnificent air of indifference, "I wonder what has become of that American girl . . . the musician. You remember, 'Miss Tolliver' was her name."

She saw that he looked at her sharply and then, disarmed by her indifference, that his face assumed an expression which matched her own.

"I don't know. I suppose she's still in New York. She was very talented."

"She planned to come to Paris some day. If she does, it would be a nice thing to do to look her up."

Her husband smiled before he answered her, a quiet amused smile such as he used to display when he caught his mother in some intricate feminine plot.

"I don't see why we should. She probably wouldn't like it. After all, it wouldn't be the same, would it?"

From this she could make nothing. All that he had said might mean anything at all. It seemed to her that the more she talked, the more confusing, the less clear everything became.

"I simply happened to think of her. She's a remarkable girl. She's had a struggle from the beginning."

"A damned fine lot," was his comment. "You'll hear from her some day."

She must have understood that all her slyness was of no use, that methods such as this brought her nowhere, for she fell silent after this until Dick rose and said, "Shall we go up? My nerves are on edge from playing all afternoon. I think I'll sleep a bit."

Then while she watched him, as from a great distance, it occurred to her that all this was scarcely the behavior of a bridegroom on his honeymoon; it was, on the contrary, as if already they had been married for years.

As she rose to go with him, a sudden decision crossed her mind. Without thinking why she was employing it, she used the one stake which she had at hand.

"Dick," she said abruptly, "I am going to have a baby."

He turned, and into his face came an expression of pleasure the like of which she had not seen there before. He smiled and, moving toward her, took her gently into his arms.

"That's fine," he said softly. "That's wonderful." And she felt him kiss her gently after a fashion that was new and disarming. It was neither a casual kiss, nor a passionate one; those two moods she knew very well. This was something new. She felt almost that she were an animal, a pet for whom he had a great affection and a strong desire to protect.

"Your mother will be pleased," she said, frightened again by the old dread of losing herself. (She was ashamed too that he should feel her tremble so.)

"She will be delighted. She wants an heir. She thinks I'm not much good at taking care of all her money." And he kissed her again in the same tender fashion.

"But it might be a girl."

He laughed a little. "No, I'm lucky . . . Think of my eleven thousand francs!"

But she saw that he wanted a boy, desperately, that he was not in the least interested in a girl. It was very foreign of him . . .

that desire for some one to carry on the name, to inherit all the fortune.

After they had gone up the stairs with the rail of red plush, he came into the sitting room again to kiss her gently and to ask if she were feeling well, and when he had gone Sabine, as she lay in the darkness among the gaudy pillows of the chaise longue, understood clearly and bitterly for the first time the change which their marriage had brought about. He was being gentle and loving not because she was a woman or because he loved her, but because she had become now by the course of nature an institution, a wife, a prospective mother. He was being tender not toward her but toward an idea. He placed her a little apart, so that the old sense of companionship was no longer possible. She was a symbol now . . . the wife and mother who was the rock and foundation, the one who produced sons to carry on name and property, but not by any chance the one who was loved because she was a woman.

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OF all the events, the emotions and the tragedy that occurred during the turbulent years spent in the Babylon Arms, nothing had hurt Ellen so much as the fashion in which Mrs. Callendar, after such a show of friendship and interest, vanished quickly and completely from her life. Even the affair with the son and the death of Clarence had had in them elements which her feminine mind found not unpleasing; there was a certain romance in the idea that it was herself whom Callendar really desired and not Sabine at all; there was even more romance, though perhaps a trifle bitter, in the idea that a man had taken his own life because he loved her too much to spoil her existence. In her headlong fashion, she was conscious that these elements contributed to her own personality; they made her an important figure with enhancing shades of romance and tragedy. That the

facts were known to so few persons as to be almost secret, only increased their fascination. Sometimes, as she walked along the boulevards or rode in the Bois beside Schneidermann, paying little heed to the accompaniment of his pretty speeches and comment upon people, pictures or music, she found herself filled with a triumph at her secret knowledge. She thought, "People who see me and talk with me little know all that has happened. They do not know that they are talking with a powerful person. They do not know the mystery and tragedy."

She began even to think that she had consciously planned each step of her progress, and she came after a time to forget that all that had happened to her had been born either of headlong impulse or through some senseless operation of circumstance.

Nevertheless there were times when she grew troubled by a sensation of insecurity. Mrs. Callendar had deserted her without a word. Rebecca might easily do the same. It was only Lily in whom she placed any real trust; with Lily there were ties of family and of blood.

She was troubled too because she knew that there was still need of the Jewess. For all the arrogance that came more and more to assert itself in her nature, for all the confidence and the secret triumph with which she looked out upon the strangers who passed by her on the boulevards and in the Bois, she understood that she was not yet ready to stand alone. She needed the guidance of persons like the gentle Schneidermann and the busy Rebecca. They knew the world; they knew the tricks by which one advanced to fame; they knew the people who were the right ones to know. She could not try her own wings because they were not yet strong enough.

Yet she must have the aid of such as Schneidermann and Rebecca without once acknowledging it. The old, twisted pride forbade her to lean upon any of them. It was a hard business.

And she would pull in her horse so that the languid Schneidermann might come abreast of her and talk without having to shout at her back. She would smile indifferently at him and say,

"It is a beautiful morning. . . . Look at the dew shining beneath the hedge. And the spider webs like nets of shining silver."

Sometimes Schneidermann rode silently by her side, stealing glances at the color in her cheeks and the blue black of her hair as she rode so straight and so proud and yet so careless of her horse, reining him in at will or galloping him madly through the long tunnels under the dripping linden trees. He was a tall thin man with an arched nose and a blond drooping mustache, rather pale and mild, who never disputed with her the choice of bridle paths or the hour they were to return. She understood that he was interested in her; he had helped her with her accent, though in this they had made little progress, for she had a stubborn, careless way of sticking to her own version of the tongue just as she had never lost completely her way of saying "dawg" for dog and "watter" for water, and persisted in the burr which came to her doubly through a Scottish heritage and a middle-western childhood. She suspected sometimes that he might even be falling in love with her and this made her knit up her brows and scowl at him furtively. She did not want him, even with all his money. She had had one husband who was mild and gentle and a bit stupid. Schneidermann was, to be sure, more intelligent than Clarence, and he knew far more of the world; it amused her to talk with him of music and art and politics, but a relationship more intimate was to her inconceivable. Aside from this worldly knowledge he was like Clarence; he possessed the same humbleness, the same physical paleness. It annoyed her to believe that she attracted only men who must be dominated.

Yet there was Callendar. Unconsciously she came to compare the humbleness of Schneidermann and Clarence with the cat-like virility of Callendar. It was as if she were putting aside all other men in the knowledge that some day, at some time if she waited long enough, she would come to possess him. Yet when she thought of him, as she frequently did after she had gone up to the luxurious room looking out upon the white pavilion, she grew angry at the memory of that last visit to the Babylon Arms.

He had watched her, cat-like, until, driven by some obscure desire, he could no longer play the game of waiting.

She came slowly, as she grew to know and understand the world, to see that he had looked upon her always as a naïve and helpless creature, awkward and a little ridiculous. It gave her a sort of restless and unhappy satisfaction that she had shown herself the more powerful.

It was not strange that she did not encounter the Callendars in Paris. The world in which they moved was more remote from hers than the Babylon Arms had been from the house on Murray Hill. True, the crêpe-hung Madame de Cyon was an acquaintance of Thérèse, but Ellen took good care that this fat, bedizened gossip should never learn of her acquaintance with the Callendars, and so it did not occur to "Tiens! Tiens!" ever to mention them. Of their life Ellen sometimes read a paragraph or two in the Daily Mail or the Herald; they were off to New York or England or had just returned to their house in the Avenue du Bois. She knew nothing of the feverish, cosmopolitan society which surrounded them, nothing of the seedy, impoverished Royalists who were the poor relations of Thérèse and lived in fine, damp, decaying houses in the remote provinces, clinging to the splendor of the past because so little else remained; she knew nothing of the rich American women who had married titles.

At the lovely old house in the Rue Raynouard there were always the friends of Lily and Madame Gigon, dowdy, bourgeois and dull, among whom Lily moved with the calm of perfect security, as the one American who had ever penetrated with any success the inmost circle about the doddering Prince Bonaparte. The presence of so vigorous and arrogant a creature as Ellen they resented bitterly and sometimes openly, so that Ellen in the end was thrown for companionship, a thing of which she stood very little in need, upon Rebecca Schönberg, Schneidermann and all their hodge-podge of musicians, artists, writers and patrons of art.

Rebecca, as the months turned into years, had come to devote

more and more of her time to the house in the Rue Raynouard. When she returned from Danzig, or Rome, or Vienna or wherever it happened to be, she came day after day to Numéro Dix where it was her habit to sit quietly in the big empty music room and listen with extraordinary attention while Ellen played hour upon hour. She watched Ellen's progress with an interest of such intensity that Ellen at times grew ill-tempered and wished heartily that the sandy haired creature would disappear forever. She would, doubtless, have committed some act to sever their relationship forever save that always in the back of her mind was the certainty that the Jewess was valuable to her.

It was really the sense of Rebecca's domination which at once annoyed and confused her; otherwise she liked her well enough. It was Rebecca who suggested the number of hours which she should practise; it was Rebecca who bullied her into going out in the world; it was Rebecca who insisted on helping her choose her clothes; it was Rebecca who even brought to the Rue Raynouard people who sent Madame Gigon into the most distant part of the house where she would be safe from the noise of their violent, modern music. It was Rebecca who at times set the house by the ears and threatened to bring about an open quarrel between Ellen and the Baron.

For a long time the enmity between these two had grown less and less concealed. Lily must have sensed conflict and in her quiet, indolent way have chosen to pretend that no strain existed. There was irony in the fact that a woman who sought only quiet and leave to do as she pleased should have found herself suddenly the battleground between two natures so violent. In dealing either with insolence or domination Lily had no difficulty; always she had gone quietly her own way achieving in the end by some unviolent coup her own desire. When she chose, even the dark, bumptious César obeyed her as a pet dog might have obeyed. She was even able to cope with Ellen (though she seldom interfered) in the very midst of the girl's most stubborn moods. Yet when César and her cousin came into conflict, she grew helpless; it was

like living perpetually on the edge of a volcano. She knew, perhaps by instinct, what it was that caused the trouble . . . that each of them sought to rule the household.

So the peace had gone presently from the lovely old house. On one side were ranged César and his aunt, the blind old Madame Gigon, reënforced by the cohorts of crêpe-laden old women who came to her salons and impressed upon her the sense of her injury. On the other were ranged Ellen and her ally, the shrewd Rebecca. Between the opposing armies stood Lily who wished only peace and luxury and indolence.

One night early in May, before Lily's household had moved to Germigny, Rebecca failed to appear for a concert they had planned to attend. There had been good reason; an aunt of Rebecca's, very rich, had arrived without warning from Vienna. Yet Ellen was unreasonable and believed that Rebecca had failed her deliberately. She had gone out for a time to walk sullenly along the Seine and when she returned, she went silently to her room and locked the door. The disappointment, the softness of the evening, the look of the lights floating in the river . . . all these things created an overwhelming and terrible nostalgia.

Once inside the room she flung herself down on the canopied bed, her blue black hair all tossed and disheveled, and, weeping, reproached herself bitterly. She was, she believed, a horrible creature. She had treated her mother cruelly; she had forgotten the existence of her brother—of Fergus, with his humorous blue eyes and magical sympathy and his uncanny way of understanding what it was that terrified her, what it was that made her unhappy, what it was that drove her on and on without rest or peace. She saw too her father, a mild man who loved her without making any claim, without once speaking of love. On all these she had turned her back in a heartless fashion.

And Clarence . . . poor Clarence . . . was always with her in these terrible moments of solitude. She knew him then as she had never known him in life; she saw him with a terrible clarity,

moving about meekly with the awful look of pleading in his near-sighted eyes. He had not been like that in the beginning; he had changed while he lived with her, changed, as it were, beneath her very eyes. And she saw him too as he lay for the last time on the divan of the little flat in the Babylon Arms, peaceful at last and untormented by a woman who always eluded him, a woman whom he loved so much that he made way with himself that he might hinder her no longer. And *him* she could never repay; it was impossible even to explain or to beg for forgiveness, though he would have said, no doubt, that there was nothing to forgive.

Then growing a little more quiet, she asked herself in one of her rare moments of reflection what power had driven her to act as she had done. To this there was no answer; it was quite beyond her. She knew, as indeed she had always known, that she must go her way, solitary and ruthless, to fulfil a rather shadowy ambition, a confused desire for vindication, a hunger for the sight of the world at her feet.

It would do no good now to turn back, because such a course could only create disaster. Sitting up among the pillows of the canopied bed she fell to staring hopelessly into the darkness. For a long time she sat thus, pale and disheveled, her long black hair streaming over the crimson peignoir. She had discovered an awful thing. She, Ellen Tolliver, who had wanted only to be free, was entangled and caught beyond all escape. She could not turn back. She could only go forward along the path which she herself had chosen, and it was a lonely path, a path so enveloped in solitude that she fell to weeping again over the desolate waste of its loneliness.

There was a moon which painted all the garden outside with a pale green light; the pastry-cake pavilion of Le Nôtre had turned to silver and the leaves of the old plane trees, rustling together now in the soft spring air, cast black shadows across the white terrace. Lured by the faint stream of silver that spilled in through the darkness at the tall window, Ellen rose presently and, sitting

on the chaise longue, looked out over the garden. To-night the familiar, distant sound of the boat whistles along the Seine seemed very close. The hoofs of a horse passing along the cobblestones of the Rue de Passy struck up a slow tattoo that leapt the garden wall and came up to the very window. It was a foreign horse, passing along a foreign street and the garden had become remote and melancholy with a new sort of beauty. It was as if she suffered from an enchantment, as if all that had happened since the day she had gone off to skate alone on Walke's Pond had been an hallucination, detached from all reality. She might wake and find herself once more in the shabby comfortable sitting room of the house on Sycamore Street. Still it could not be a dream; because if she returned to that shabby room, she would find it occupied by strangers she had never seen. Her mother would no longer be there, darning in the firelight, nor her father sleeping on the great divan, nor Fergus, nor Robert. They were all gone now . . . gone, strange to say, in pursuit of herself. Perhaps one day they would come as far as this lovely garden. Ma would like it only because her children were there, but Fergus would know its meaning, how much of old beauty that was beyond expression lay in the silver pavilion, in the mottled trunks of the old trees and in the black filigree of shadows across the white terrace. If only Fergus could be there she would not be lonely. . . .

And for the first time in all her life, she became sharply aware of the passing of time. She heard it rushing past her and knew that slowly, like a tide rising upon a beach of shingle, the years were stealing upon her, the years and a desperate haunting loneliness which it seemed impossible ever to escape.

Sitting there in the moonlight, the whole of the past rose up in a queer, muddled procession. There had been in the progression of events neither rule nor reason. Fate, one might call it, but fate was a silly name. It meant nothing; it could not explain

how Clarence had turned toward her and so changed all the course of her existence; it did not explain Mr. Wyck and his muddled part in the suicide of Clarence; it did not solve that sudden, passionate interval with Richard Callendar. It was all senseless and muddled.

People might judge her as hard and cold and calculating but that, she thought, would be unjust. She had been forced to make her own way, to clear her path by the best means at hand. She had tried always to do it without harm to others. She was not, like Sabine Cane, born with all that one needed in this world. If she had been born, having those things, she might have been more happy, less lonely, less aloof. Sabine, she reflected bitterly, had everything . . . wealth and friends and happiness. Even her husband had been delivered into her hands, a man who, if chance had been less cruel, might not have been hers. She envied Sabine.

So she fell to thinking of Callendar. What might have happened if she had hurt Clarence deliberately and gone away with her lover? Callendar would have married her. She would have been rich. She would have been free. There would have been no more of this struggle.

But she could not be certain. For the first time, thinking of him now out of the detachment of her loneliness, she doubted him. He might not have married her, after all. Why should he have done it? And if he had married her he might not have been stronger than this other thing which kept driving her on, this terrible ambition that was like a disease with which one was born.

What would love have been with a man like Callendar? She trembled a little at the memory of him, grown softer now with the passing of time and more sentimental. With Clarence love had been a poor timid growth, choked and inarticulate, a thing that somehow he made shameful. Callendar was not like that. Love with him must be a great glowing passion that would overwhelm all else, even her own terrible awareness.

She sighed and bound up her hair. All that had passed long ago and was done. She might die now without ever knowing anything more wonderful than the stifled, timid embraces of Clarence.

Idly, out of nowhere, into her brain there strayed presently a memory of old Julia Shane. It had happened when Ellen was a little girl and she could not think why she had remembered it, yet unaccountably it was there in her head, very clear, like an old photograph found by chance after many years. She saw old Julia sitting in the big drawing-room of Shane's Castle on a Christmas day talking with Grandpa Barr. She was thin and hawklike and leaned forward now and then on her ebony stick to give the coals in the grate an angry poke. She had been quarreling with the vigorous old man and presently she said sharply, poking the fire for emphasis, "Fate! Pooh! Robert! Fate is no great tide that sweeps everything before it. It is a river that goes this way and that, and the smart fellow is the one who jumps when it turns in his direction!"

Aunt Julia has been right. Fate was like that and, Ellen reflected, she had jumped when she saw it coming her way, but by ill luck she had jumped sometimes full into the midst of the stream and been swept along by it.

Lost in this sudden memory she was interrupted sharply by a murmur of voices arising from the garden. Without stirring she listened and, presently, recognizing that one was Lily's and the other that of the Baron, she made no attempt to move out of hearing. Once, a long time ago when she had first come to Paris, she would have moved away or have let them know by some sign that she was nearby, watching and listening; but that time had long gone by. She listened now either because she was shameless or because in the mood of the moment it did not matter what things she learned. And in some way the sight of the two dark figures, moving so close to each other up and down the white terrace, dissipated the terrible loneliness.

The pair below her knew, no doubt; that Madame Gigon was

long since snoring among the gimcracks of her bedroom, and they believed that she herself was out, at the theater with Rebecca. In the French manner, the servants did not matter; it is probable that of all the people in the house they knew most of Lily and her life.

The Baron's voice, deep and rich, drifted up to the open window.

"Jean, you say, will be back from school in June?"

He wore his uniform, and the perfection of its lines emphasized all the trim, masculine hardness of his slight figure. Beside him in her black gown, with the stole of sable thrown round her for warmth, Lily was soft and lovely. His voice it seemed, caressed her.

"He is growing big now . . . fourteen. Think of it. . . ." He laughed softly. "*You* with a big boy of fourteen! It is impossible . . . *incroyable!*"

Lily said something which was not audible and then, "Yes. We must be more careful. He will begin to see things."

"In England boys are not so sharp . . . at least not about affairs between men and women."

In silence they walked for a time, once up and once down the terrace. The leaves of the plane trees rustled and a boat far below in the Seine whistled faintly. Once more they passed beneath the window.

"June is more than a month away," said the Baron. "We could go to Nice for three long weeks."

Lily, it seemed, was unwilling, for he argued with her, saying in a voice that would have melted steel, "Think of it. . . . We have not been alone for months. Think of it . . . the mornings . . . waking together . . . looking out over the bay. . . . Alone . . . alone." He paused suddenly and seizing her in his arms kissed her. For a long time they stood thus. Ellen could see them quite plainly, standing in the shadow of one of the white urns, Lily with her head against his shoulder while he kissed her again and again.

Then slowly, with the air of waking from a dream, Lily raised

her head and passing her hand against her eyes, murmured, "I should not like Ellen to know."

At this he laughed and a new note, one of hard anger, entered his voice. "She knows already if she is not a fool."

At the intonation Lily withdrew and leaned against one of the white urns. "She doesn't. I'm sure of it. She has said nothing."

Again he laughed, scornfully. "She's no fool. She knows it would be more unpleasant for her than for you. She needs a home and money . . . just now. She'll not open her eyes so long as it might harm her plans."

Sitting there in the darkness, Ellen succumbed to a slow anger that rose to her head like a fever. She had believed that he spoke against her; now she was sure of it. She hated him vaguely, because he dared even to say such a thing to her cousin. He was so sure of himself, the amorous beast.

She was hurt too, as if some one had struck her, because what César had said was so near to the truth.

But Lily turned away from him. "I won't have you say such things," she said. "It is ridiculous and unjust."

He did not use words in defense of himself, perhaps because words were to him such weak and awkward weapons. Instead, he simply took Lily once more in his arms, and beneath his kisses, Ellen saw that all resistance, all anger melted from her. It was like a bit of wax touched suddenly by a flame. . . . An amazing sight which seemed to illumine sharply the whole of Lily's strange life.

After a moment, he placed his arm about her waist and they moved away down the steps into the shadow of the plane trees. Once they halted for a time while he kissed her again and then, resuming their way in the same state of enchantment, they disappeared through the filigree of black shadows into the white pavilion, silvered by the moon.

And in the room above the terrace, Ellen slipped from the chaise longue to the floor where she lay flung out, weeping passionately. The loneliness returned now more terribly than ever before

IN the morning, after coffee and brandy, Ellen rose at dawn to ride in the Bois. She went purposely without Schneidermann, leaving him to a vain pursuit, in order that she might be alone; and when she returned she found that Lily was already awake and had come down from her room to breakfast on the terrace. The May sunlight poured into the garden and beat against the stone of the façade, enveloping her with its reflected warmth, as she sat at the iron table before a bowl of hot chocolate, a dish of rolls and two piles of letters. One heap had been opened and the contents lay scattered over the table and on the flagging beneath. As Ellen, tall and slim in her riding habit and hard hat, stepped through the tall window Lily put down a letter and said, "I brought your mail out here. It isn't interesting this morning . . . mostly bills."

Ellen throwing down her crop and hat, ran her fingers through her dark hair and seated herself on the opposite side of the table, while Lily sent for more chocolate and hot rolls.

"You look tired," observed Lily. "Were you out late?"

"No. Rebecca couldn't go with me, and I was tired so I didn't go at all. But I slept badly."

Lily turned the page of the note she was reading. "You work too hard," she said. "Try taking a rest. Come down to the country with me in June."

"No, I can't do that . . . I'm going to play in London. Rebecca and Schneidermann have arranged it. It will be my début."

She announced the news abruptly, without any show of emotion.

Lily put down the letter and leaned toward her. "You didn't tell me it would be so soon."

"I only knew it for certain last night. I'm superstitious about speaking of things until they're certain. I'm to play in Wigmore Street on the third."

Her cousin was all interest now. She drew her chair a little nearer and carelessly pushed her letters off the edge of the table.

"Have you chosen a gown? We'll send for the motor and choose one this morning. That's important, you know . . . especially in England where they recognize good clothes but never wear them."

"I can't go this morning. . . . I'm going to Philippe."

"To-morrow then," said Lily. "I shall go over to London for the concert and bring Jean back with me. . . . Perhaps César can go too."

"Not him!" Ellen interrupted sullenly. "He'd spoil everything."

For a moment the two cousins regarded each other in silence. In Ellen's face there was a look of bitterness that appeared more and more frequently of late, a sort of devil-may-care expression that puzzled Lily and disturbed her. They had never recognized the breach before . . . not, at least, openly.

"Why shan't César come?" she put forward gently.

"He hates me! I know that!"

Lily endeavored to pour oil on the waters. "It's not true. You're rude to each other . . . both of you. Why is it? There's no reason. He doesn't really dislike you?"

For a time, Ellen came very close to being unpleasant; she was tempted to reveal all she had seen and heard from the window above the moonlit garden. The memory of César's words rang in her ears, a taunt in which there was too much of truth. But she could not say that she hated César because he never allowed her any peace of mind. She could not say that she never saw him without thinking of Callendar.

"It's nothing . . . nonsense, I daresay, on both sides." The power of Lily's eager friendliness overwhelmed her. "I'm sorry," she added, "that I'm disagreeable sometimes. . . . I've been worried lately. I know the quarrel is my fault too." She tore open one of her letters and then, looking very pale, she added, "Bring him, if he would like to come. . . . It won't matter."

And Lily never knew what it was that softened her so abruptly. She did not know, of course, that Ellen was thinking of Callendar,

hoping desperately that he could be there to listen to her music as he had listened so many times, with all the passionate abandon which meant so much to her. She needed Fergus too, for she was frightened now that the chance, awaited so long, was at hand. With César present she would at least be reminded of Callendar. It would be the next best thing to having him or Fergus in a cold audience of strangers.

On the top of the little pile of letters was one from her mother from which she read portions aloud to her cousin.

"We are settled now in seven rooms in East Seventieth Street. There is room for Fergus and Robert and Papa and I, and a room for Gramp and his books, which he would not leave behind. And an extra room which I have let to a young man who works with an electrical company. He has nice manners and seems to be of a very good family. He talks a great deal about them. It seems that his family was rich once, a long time ago. He was very unhappy in a boarding house, but he likes it here. . . ."

Lily, who had been listening closely to the news, looked up as Ellen suddenly stopped reading and allowed the letter to slip to the ground. She saw that her cousin reached down hastily and recovered it, as if she wished to conceal her agitation.

"Not bad news?" asked Lily.

"No. I was just surprised for a moment by something in the letter. I think . . . I think I know the young man she writes of. Still I can't understand what chance brought him and Ma together. . . . It's an idiotic world. . . . There's no sense in it." She lighted a cigarette, and after a thoughtful silence added, "Ma is a remarkable woman. Think of her, tearing a whole family up by its roots and transplanting it without a thought."

Then she continued reading. The family, she learned, were all very comfortable in their new home. Fergus might be going abroad in a year or two . . . some sort of writing work, with a newspaper. Hattie had recaptured him only to lose him again,

at once. Robert was the same, the plodder of the family, silent, unbrilliant, a sort of rock and foundation as old Jacob Barr had been before him. They were hoping to see Ellen soon now. She must come home, now that they were settled in New York. And in the end there was the usual refrain. *I am looking forward to the day when I can make a home for all my children.*

When she had finished reading, they both sat for a time in silence and at last Lily said simply, "She'll never give up, will she?"

In the same pile there was a note from Rebecca sent by hand from the Regina where she was stopping. It read:

"I'm sorry about last night but it couldn't be helped. How was I to know that Aunt Lina was arriving from Vienna and hadn't been in Paris for twenty-five years? She had to be looked after and will take a great deal of my time, I suppose, as she plans to stay a month if I cannot get her off before that. She is important because she is very rich and has no children. Uncle Otto owns a sapphire mine in Cambodia. And I am her god-daughter. (Her real name is Rebecca, but in the family they call her Lina because there are so many Rebeccas.) Besides, some day she may be of use to us in Vienna, especially when the time comes for you to play there. She is rich and has myriads of rich friends who all spend money on the arts.

"I won't let her interfere with the plans for London. I've talked to Schneidermann and in case I can't get away at once, he will go over and arrange things in plenty of time. He knows the ropes. Don't let Lily help to choose your gown without my being there. She has beautiful taste but it's too quiet for an artist. The public, especially in England and America, expects something spectacular from a musician. I'll try to run out for a moment to-day if I can get rid of Aunt Lina. Perhaps I can make her believe she is tired from the journey and stay in bed all day. Here's to the triumph in London!

REBECCA."

The note troubled her, so that when Lily rose, and murmuring something, went into the house to dress, Ellen took no notice of her but got up and walked, in her slim black riding habit with the skirt pinned high (she did not ride astride, because she thought it ugly) down the steps into the garden.

If Rebecca failed her now, either through Aunt Lina or otherwise, she felt that she would not have courage to go on. She would kill herself because there would be nothing left. She fancied the humiliation of playing before row upon row of empty seats. If fate played her such a dirty trick, she would put herself out of fate's way. She was sick to death of being buffeted about, this way and that, achieving neither success nor happiness.

Angrily she beat her skirt with her riding crop. If Schneidermann went to London, it would only put her hopelessly in his debt. She might have to marry him out of gratitude, and she wanted no more weak husbands to clutter up her life.

And then this business of Wyck turning up suddenly as a lodger in her mother's house! It could be no one else; her mother's description fitted him too perfectly . . . *a man whose family had been rich once, who worked with an electrical company, who talked a great deal of past splendors.* He had reappeared, armed with her secret. She could fancy her mother caring for him, making him comfortable, giving him all the attentions he yearned for and never received in a world which kicked him about. She could trust Fergus, but Mr. Wyck was nasty, feminine. Still he had not betrayed his acquaintance either with her or poor Clarence. If he had done that, her mother would have spoken of it in her letter. . . . A friend of one of Hattie's children would be like a child of her own. It may have been that he felt as guilty as she herself felt; if that were true, he would not be likely to betray her. She thought of his shifting green eyes, his mincing manner and his habit of talking perpetually of the past. He was a worm . . . something one might find on lifting a stone!

Twice she had made the round of the garden, indifferent now

in the midst of her own worries to the nearness of the guilty pavilion, when she saw Augustine, the maid, coming toward her with a card. For some reason, she was overcome by a sudden feeling that this bit of paper which the red-faced Breton girl held in her hand was of immense importance. She found herself hurrying forward to meet her. She found herself reading the name and then, looking up, she saw in one of the tall windows that opened on the terrace, the figure of Sabine Cane . . . Sabine Callendar . . . standing in the brilliant sunlight, dressed all in gray, superbly, with a gray veil that fell over her shoulders . . . the same Sabine, poised, indifferent, striking. Nothing had changed save that she looked old, surprisingly so considering the perfection of her make-up.

The call must indeed be important, since Sabine had followed Augustine straight into the garden.

They sat in the long drawing-room where they might look out over the sun-drenched garden with its blue flame of irises lighting up the expanses of gray stone.

"What a lovely house!" remarked Sabine as she drew off her gloves. "I suppose it is your cousin's."

The speech was stiff, constrained by the vague shadow of hostility that had enveloped them, almost at once—an intangible thing, which it is probable both women felt but failed to understand, because each fancied herself too intelligent to be the victim of jealousy.

"Yes. It belongs to Madame Shane."

Sabine laughed. "It's the sort of house I would like. You see we live, when we're in Paris, in a sort of World's Fair exhibit in the Avenue du Bois."

It surprised Ellen to find that a single, small word such as "we" could cause her any feeling. She found too that the presence of Sabine had turned back the years; she was watching her now, as she might watch an enemy, as she had watched her in the days

when she had gone, a young and awkward girl, to the big house on Murray Hill. She had not "watched" people in quite this fashion for a long time now.

She felt herself quite a match for the wordly woman who sat, carefully, with the brilliant light at her back; she could no longer be taken at a disadvantage.

"It is strange," said Ellen, "that we have not met before."

Sabine's scarlet lips curved in a bright hard smile. "I saw you once, in the distance, at the Ritz. It was nearly four years ago. You went out before I was able to speak to you." She coughed, nervously. "So I lost trace of you. I was sorry, because I was interested to know how you had come to Paris so soon."

"I just came. There was nothing strange about it."

"But I thought there were so many difficulties."

"They happened to disappear very quickly . . . through a series of chances."

The old Sabine, the one Ellen had known so well, the Sabine who was always prying into the affairs of other people, showed itself now, yet there was a difference, impossible to define save that now her interest seemed to be more personal, more intense, not so cold and abstract.

"You see," she continued, "Mrs. Callendar found your address through Madame de Cyon."

(So Mrs. Callendar had known all along that she was in Paris.)

"I have not seen her," said Ellen, "since I left New York."

For a moment, the shadow of a mocking, bitter smile crossed Sabine's face.

"She is just the same. . . . Just as vigorous, just as determined."

"I should like to see her again. . . . Perhaps she will be interested to know that I make my *début* in London in June."

At this, even the indifferent mask of Sabine betrayed a flicker of surprise. "So you're still working at your music."

Ellen laughed. "Of course. What did you think?"

"But it has taken a long time."

"Naturally. It meant work. I was taking no chances."

So they talked, rather stupidly, fencing with each other, making no progress. It was clear that Sabine had not called at such an hour simply through politeness, nor was it likely that she called because she sought to renew an old acquaintance. Both women were too intelligent to have misunderstood each other. As for Ellen, she found herself excited by the consciousness of a shadowy struggle; there was a devilish satisfaction in finding herself with an advantage over so experienced a woman as Sabine. The visitor wanted something; beneath all her indifference, she was clearly excited and nervous. Once Ellen caught her pulling a button from her gray gloves.

It occurred to her suddenly to be bold and strike at what might be the root of the matter.

"How is Mr. Callendar?" she asked, amused at the thought of speaking thus of him.

"He is well," Sabine replied with a terrible quietness, and then, after a little pause. "Do you see him frequently?"

For an instant Ellen was very near to losing her temper, a thing she might easily have done now that she found herself a match for Sabine. But she did not; instead she waited and said, "What do you mean? How could I have seen him? I have not seen him since I came to Paris."

The answer was so honest, so obviously true, that even Sabine was discountenanced. She looked at the floor and murmured, "I didn't know. I thought perhaps you had."

"Why didn't you ask him?" suggested Ellen.

"It would have done no good. Besides he would have thought me jealous." There was something pitiful in the terrible control exercised by the woman. Even Ellen forgot suddenly the strange sense of enmity. She kept silent and it was Sabine who spoke.

"Besides," she said. "You never spoke of him or of Mrs.

Callendar to Madame de Cyon. That made me think you might have seen him."

"It would only have made complications," replied Ellen. "If you knew Madame de Cyon, you would understand." Her voice suddenly grew cold. "Did you think," she asked, "that he had brought me to Paris? Did you think I was carrying on an affair . . . secretly?"

The more they talked, the clearer grew the likeness of the one to the other. They were in both the same restraint, the same watchfulness, the same determination that the world should not hurt her.

When Ellen looked at her visitor again she saw that she had been weeping, silently; she was putting a handkerchief, stealthily, to her eyes, ashamed clearly that she should have so revealed her unhappiness.

"I have been wretched all day," she said. "You see little Thérèse and I . . . that's my little daughter, she's three years old . . . found a starving kitten yesterday. It had fleas and we washed it with carbolic soap. It's sick. I'm afraid we've hurt it and it may die. Little Thérèse is very fond of it."

Then, quite silently, the tears began to stream down her face. It was the only sign she gave. She did not sob. Her hands did not tremble. She simply wept.

It was a terrible sight, because Ellen understood plainly that the kitten had nothing to do with the tears.

Presently, after she had had a glass of port, Sabine took Ellen's hand and murmured, "You must forgive me. I was spiteful and rude . . . and unjust too. But you see there were so many things. You knew my husband a little, so you can guess perhaps something of the story."

Then pressing her hand to her head, she was silent for a time. "You see I have had a child . . . a daughter . . . and I can never have another. Mrs. Callendar and Richard want a son . . . I know that. . . . The old woman wants some one to

care for all her money. You see, he's no good at it. They've never said anything, but I know she wants me to divorce him so that he can marry again. I can feel all their will working against me. . . . It's horrible. It's sinister. It's always concealed by smiles and smooth words. I can't do that. . . . I can't. . . . Not yet . . . perhaps some day." The tears began to flow again, for even Sabine could not keep from pitying herself. "And I know there are other women. . . . I think I am a little mad to behave in this fashion . . . to come to you, like this." She coughed nervously. "You were always so strong and so independent. So was I . . . once."

She rose and dried her eyes and powdered her nose. "Now," she said, "I look presentable again." Then she took Ellen's hand and murmured: "You'll forgive me, won't you? I've been a fool. . . . And you'll say nothing?"

Ellen moved with her toward the long stairs that led up to the door opening upon the street. Together they climbed them, quite close to each other in the friendliest fashion, and from the doorway Ellen watched her, composed once more, chic and worldly, step into her tiny motor and drive away.

As she turned from the door and descended the stairs, it occurred to her suddenly that save for chance she might have been the unhappy woman entering the motor. It was amazing what Callendar had done to Sabine. Last night she had been envying her, and to-day Sabine had come to her almost, one might say, seeking help. . . . Sabine who had been so cold and impregnable and aloof.

And in a strange way, in spite even of Sabine's insults, she had given her sympathy. It was as if they had, tacitly, become allies in the battle against him.

AUNT LINA did not interrupt the plans, for she spent only two weeks in Paris and left declaring that it had changed for the worse during the twenty-five years that had passed since her last visit. The new houses looked just like the houses in Vienna; her friends had died or gone away; in fact she could see no reason at all for ever having left Vienna. So Rebecca went over to London to make the arrangements and Schneidermann did what he could in Paris.

Between them, they set in motion a caravan of gossip and small talk which found its way through devious channels into Berlin, Munich, London, Rome and New York. Sometimes news of this new pianist (who was so remarkable) was carried by word of mouth; sometimes it was relayed by letter to the members of Rebecca's tribe scattered across the face of Europe. After a conference in the Rue Raynouard, attended by Lily, Schneidermann, Rebecca, Ellen and César (who took part resentfully until it occurred to him that if Ellen could be made famous he might be free of her forever), a name was chosen. "Ellen Tolliver" was commonplace and carried no implications that were not solid, respectable and bourgeois. The name which emerged after three hours of frantic argument was "Lilli Barr," a name compounded out of Lily's name and the name of old Jacob Barr . . . a name that might be anything, a name that had a slight turn toward the Hungarian, a name that was abundant of implications. A musician called Lilli Barr could have no past that was not glamorous and romantic; and between them, Rebecca and Schneidermann proceeded to invent just such a past by creating out of nothing the most amazing tales.

In all the hubbub and preparations Sabine was forgotten, but the memory of Callendar remained. Ellen, now Lilli Barr, prayed that he might reappear for just one night.

The success of the concert in Wigmore Street is now a part of

musical history. In London Rebecca drafted the services of an immense family connection; fully one half the seats were taken by Bettelheims, Rakonitzes, Czelovars, Schönbergs and Abramsons; there were even one or two Rothschilds present in a box. Schneidermann recruited another group, less numerous but more cynical and hostile, from the musical world. Pictures of Lilli Barr (who photographed splendidly) appeared in the illustrated papers, and the critics, instead of sending their second or third assistants to the concert, appeared in person.

It was all admirably managed. The shrewd brain of Rebecca forgot nothing. In those busy days the friendly little Jewess with the red hair and ferrety eyes stood forth for the first time in all the glory of her rôle as impresaria; and when the concert was over and the notices read, it was clear that she had been right in the instinct that had led her to speak to the pale, disagreeable girl in black who had paced the deck of the *City of Paris* five years before. Rebecca had loved music always; she had wished earnestly all her life to be an artist of one sort or another; she had spent years in rushing madly from one capital to another in search of diversion or occupation, and now she was settled. She had found her place as "the exploitress," as Schneidermann expressed it, of Lilli Barr, the new star upon the horizon of music.

But there was one thing of which Rebecca knew nothing and which Ellen chose to keep a secret because it could have been of interest to none save herself. After she had played the first group on her program and returned to the platform in response to the applause, she caught a glimpse among the shadows in the back of the hall of a dark, familiar face. It astonished her that she should have noticed it at all, and once she had seen it, the rest of the audience failed to trouble her; it no longer had any existence. From that moment there had been a strange lift apparent in her music, a wild sort of ecstasy which carried every one with it. She played for one person. Among the shadows at

the back of the hall Callendar sat, listening, his dark sleek head bent forward a little. He was alone.

It was Rebecca who saw to it, in the months which followed, that Ellen was seen at the proper places, dressed with just a touch of fantasy so that she might attract notice and yet not be taken for a demi-mondaine; it was Rebecca who saw to it that Ellen's fierce dark beauty (so confident now in her triumph so arrogant) was set down for posterity by the most fashionable portrait painter in England, a man with a romantic reputation whom the gullible public would in time connect with Lilli Barr in some hazy intrigue which had never existed. It was Rebecca who saw to it that Ellen was photographed beside this composer and that one, and that the photographs, skilfully made with an eye to public attention, fell into proper hands and traveled to America where they looked forth from the pages of the Sunday supplements into the startled, proud faces of Charles and Hattie Tolliver and Fergus and Robert. They even found their way, after the rest of the family had exhausted the possibilities of the papers, into the cell of Gramp Tolliver who chuckled with wicked satisfaction over the spectacle of the ruthless granddaughter who had, after all, escaped.

And they found their way back to the Town where Mrs. Herman Biggs (née Seton and now the mother of three children) clipped them and showed them to the neighbors and to her brother Jimmy, a spindly, nervous youth of nineteen, who in his childhood had been honored more than once by cuffs from the hands of Lilli Barr which the newspapers said (via Miss Schönberg) were insured for one hundred thousand dollars.

In her boarding house, Cousin Eva Barr, last of the family, dominated the greasy meals for more than a week by the stories of the childhood of Lilli Barr. Under the spell of the reflected glamour, she forgot even the charities she administered so grimly, and spent most of her day at meetings and walking along streets where she would be likely to encounter people who would ask

about her cousin. For in all the excitement, it seemed that in some way she herself had at last escaped the tradition that made a vigorous, unmarried woman into a grim, forbidding dreadnought.

Miss Ogilvie too shared the triumph though in a different fashion. It was she, after all, who had discovered Lilli Barr; but it was not this which warmed her fluttering heart so much as the old secret of the missing five hours, which even now she shared with no one. It was Miss Ogilvie—poor, timid, Miss Ogilvie—trapped like Cousin Eva Barr in the tradition of an earlier generation, who had helped this Lilli Barr to escape. And in her thoughts (she being a sentimental creature and knowing nothing of the truth) the little parlor took on a new glow of romance and glamour. At times, when her secret seemed almost too difficult to keep, she fancied that some day, after she herself was dead, they might place on the front of her house a little tablet with an inscription which read, "It was from this house on the Fifth of January, 1903, that Lilli Barr (then Ellen Tolliver) eloped . . . etc. etc."

So, in the first years of her fame, Ellen remained a little dazed by her success. She moved, terrified always on the eve of a concert, going between concerts her hard-working, secretive way, so that there grew up about her, in addition to all Rebecca's marvelous lies, a legend of mystery. Few people knew her or anything at all of her real life. There were only the gaudy stories of Rebecca's fabrication which people believed and yet did not believe because there were so many of them and they were all so conflicting. In place of the old coldness and restraint, which melted only when Ellen's fingers touched the keyboard of a Bechstein or a Steinway, Rebecca managed to create such a sense of splendor and unmorality that presently the newspapers, as old Sanson had done long ago, came to speak of her as a second Teresa Carreño.

She caught too from Rebecca something of the latter's con-

tagious sense of showmanship and came to understand presently that if one wished to be sensationally successful it was necessary not only to be a fine musician but something of a charlatan as well. She learned not simply to walk out upon the platform; she made an entrance. In Paris, where Rebecca managed to buy up most of the press, she had a great following. Women came to the concerts for no other reason than to see her clothes and to study the youthful perfection of her figure.

Success and triumph flared up in her path in whatever direction she turned, yet there were times when the old doubts, the old self-reproach, assailed her bitterly.

One night, as she left the Salle Gaveau after a concert, and stood waiting with Rebecca for Schneidermann's motor to come up, the sight of an *affiche* bearing the name LILLI BARR in great letters filled her with a kind of terror. Silently she gazed at it, fascinated by the name and the program in small letters beneath it . . . Bach, Schumann, Moussorgsky, Chopin, Debussy . . . all the great names dwarfed beneath the gigantic LILLI BARR. She knew that on the sidewalk, almost within arm's length of her, there stood students, hungry and a little threadbare, who waited by the door to catch a glimpse of her as she left the hall. She knew that this Lilli Barr, whose name was set forth in letters so gigantic, had every reason to be content. Lilli Barr . . . Lilli Barr. . . She stared at the name with a curious sensation of strangeness, of detachment. Lilli Barr was herself now, and Ellen Tolliver was dead, swallowed up by a fantastic creature whom Rebecca and Schneidermann between them had created. To the world Ellen Tolliver had no existence; she had never lived at all, and she had now to play a rôle—to put on a false face—that the world might not discover it had been deceived. She was still playing the mountebank, the charlatan, as she had done in the drawing-room on Murray Hill behind a painted screen with a Russian tenor and a Javanese dancer. For a moment she hated Lilli Barr with a passionate hatred. She had lost possession forever of Ellen Tolliver. In the midst of her pride there had al-

ways been the grain of humility, fiercely hidden from the world, which made her in spite of everything an artist.

The voice of Rebecca, shrewd and sleek with her success as an "exploitress," sounded in her ear.

"Here's the motor. . . . We'll be late and the others will have arrived without you." (Always hustling . . . Rebecca . . . always pushing from one thing to another.)

César, for all his hopes, had not yet lost her. At that very moment the house in the Rue Raynouard was filled with people whom Schneidermann and Rebecca had called in . . . actresses, writers, rich bankers with a fancy for art, musicians, perhaps even a demi-mondaine or two . . . all the rag, tag and bobtail gathered from a dozen cities of Europe. What was she doing among them? She? Ellen Tolliver? Had she lost possession of herself?—that precious self she had guarded always with such secrecy?

It was not Ellen Tolliver who was going to this noisy party. It was Lilli Barr, a creature who had been made out of nothing. Ellen Tolliver would have gone to her room and wept a little over her loneliness.

The voice of Rebecca again . . .

"Ravel is coming to-night. He wants to speak with you about the new suite he has done. . . . It is important. Be nice to him."

It was all a long way from Walker's Pond.

For two years she lived, thus, almost in public, sustained always by the glorious vitality descended to her from Hattie Tolliver and guided by Rebecca who allowed her to miss no opportunity. She was tireless. She appeared everywhere. Yet there was a remoteness about her which none penetrated, save perhaps Callendar whose dark face appeared now and then in the back of some concert hall, now in Paris, now in London, now in Rome, wherever his path chanced to cross that of Lilli Barr. Sometimes as she came upon the stage she caught a fleeting glimpse of him, watching her as he had watched on that first awful evening in

Wigmore Street, when so much had hung in the balance. He was always alone.

During the second summer she set out with Rebecca to visit Vienna and exploit Aunt Lina and her friends, and to play in Salzburg; but they never arrived, for on the day they left Paris the Archduke Ferdinand was shot in Serajevo.

On the same day Fergus sailed for London.

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IT was Fergus who first called Gramp The Everlasting. The name was not original; he found it in one of the seed catalogues which his father brought into the apartment; for Charles Tolliver, shut up all day in a government office and all night in a city flat, led vicariously a life which in happier times had been a reality. The living room was cluttered with the catalogues of gardening houses and journals which dealt with agriculture, stock breeding and horses. The outward life of the gentle man was scarcely more than an illusion; a man with Charles Tolliver's face and dressed in Charles Tolliver's clothes lived at an address in the east Seventies of New York City; the same man worked at the Customs House, eating his lunch modestly in one of the little restaurants where Clarence and Mr. Wyck had once taken their gloomy meals. But the real Charles Tolliver was not to be found in any of these places. He lived perpetually among the farms of a county in the Midlands, or in the hotel bars and parlors of the Town, talking endlessly of the Grand Circuit races. And sometimes he was to be found seated with a fishing rod on the banks of a clear stream a thousand miles from the greasy current of the North River. When he was not in such places, he could be found among the catalogues which displayed gay colored pictures of gigantic beets and ears of sweet corn, or in the pages of journals which had splendid pictures of prize cows and great

herds of cattle grazing knee deep in alfalfa. Sometimes he found pictures of his old friend Judge Wilkins' prize shorthorns and on such occasions he grew sentimental and talked of the county as an old man talks of the love affairs of his youth. One would have thought that the triumph of each new blue ribbon won by Judge Wilkins' prize bull, Herkimer Sextant, was a personal triumph of Charles Tolliver. The city had for him no reality; it was a dreary episode, a nightmare from which he would in time awake as he awakened reluctantly from the pleasant dreams he had when, carefully tucked in on the divan by Hattie's capable hand, he escaped for a little while from the ugliness of the hard, unreal city. Since he had come from the Town, the habit of sleep had grown upon him: it was a drug . . . hashish or opium.

It was in one of his garden catalogues that Fergus found the name. Seizing the booklet in hilarious triumph, he bore it to his mother and, holding it open, he showed her a large picture in color of a gigantic raspberry advertised as bearing throughout the season. Underneath in bold letters there stood forth in an amazing coincidence the name—TOLLIVER'S EVERLASTING. The name stuck and from then on the family referred to Gramp with humorous disrespect by that name. At length the old man himself overheard it and was delighted. He resolved then to see his hundredth birthday. In the solitude of his room, he felt amazingly brittle and young. Time rushed past him; tremendous things happened to the family, but he remained passive, unchanged because he had no emotions left to exhaust him.

The war that trapped Ellen and Rebecca Schönberg somewhere in the neighborhood of Trieste dawned upon the Tollivers in the most conventional fashion. At first they talked of it as impossible and absurd, and for the first time in years Gramp emerged from his seclusion to discuss with Robert (for whom he had an intense dislike) the Siege of Paris, which he had lived through in his youth. Indeed his interest attained such a magnitude that he very nearly revealed a secret hope that one day he might be taken, &

millstone about his daughter-in-law's neck, back to the city where he had spent what she would have called "a profligate youth." But he took care not to mention the wish for fear that Hattie, in revenge for so many defeats over so many years, would do all in her power to thwart it. At ninety he wanted to see Paris again. He developed a passion for the military maps which appeared in the newspapers and used up all the pins in the house tracing the advance of the Germans toward the Marne.

As for Hattie, she gave small heed to his eccentricities, for she was occupied with other things. Her son, her best-beloved, was in England; she could not trust him. He might join in the war. She knew him well enough to know that he would not stop to weigh the chances of death; such a spectacle would fascinate him. And she knew that her daughter, in the company of an unearthly creature called Rebecca Schönberg (whom she had come to regard darkly as a sort of procuress), was lost somewhere in Austria. Until now, these foreign nations had meant little to her save that they were in the part of the world from which came the hordes of aliens who jostled her in the street. But now all was changed; a great war was no longer a distant affair to be treated with indifference. Her children were involved. She fancied Fergus already ill and wounded. She saw Ellen taken for a spy and immured in the sort of a dungeon one saw in the lurid pictures of the Sunday papers.

The news that came at last into the midst of her frantic anxiety brought her no peace. The two letters arrived by the same mail. The one from Fergus contained the information that he had gone to France, that vaguely he was trying to find a place where he might see the war. He was all right, he wrote. She must remember his excellent luck. It was all terrible, tragic, incredible . . . the sights he had already seen, the things he had already heard. Yet it was magnificent too; somehow between the lines of a letter which he had meant to be reassuring and a little cold, she caught a sense of his reckless enthusiasm. She understood that he saw the war as a great spectacle. She remembered him as a little boy,

wild with excitement at the glitter and pomp of a circus parade, intoxicated by the splendor, captured by the romance.

And she knew that she could not stop him. She knew that all the ink in the world and all the words she might write with it would not hold him back. It was all so clear in his letter. The image returned to her again and again . . . a little boy, running recklessly, wildly toward the gaudy parade. . . . Only this time the parade was tragic and wound its length half way across the face of Europe. And because it was so gigantic, it was all the more powerful, all the more glamorous. What could she do against it?

Sometimes she cursed Gramp, The Everlasting, for the wandering spirit he had passed on to her children, and sometimes she reproached her own people for their strength and energy. If her children had been poor weak things she would never have lost them; she could have guarded them always. Sometimes when her worry and despair became overwhelming, she had a terrible premonition that in the end she would be left, alone, with that terrible sardonic old man, her father-in-law.

But Ellen was coming home! Ellen was coming home! She wrote from a place called Genoa to say that she was sailing in two days with Rebecca Schönberg, whom Hattie pictured as sallow, dark and sinister. Ellen had escaped from Austria, out of the midst of the war! She had been arrested with the dangerously international Miss Schönberg, but in the end, due to Miss Schönberg's Aunt Lina and Uncle Otto, everything had been set right and they were allowed to go by boat from Pola into Italy. It was a wretched experience. The police, the soldiers . . . every one was stupid and a little insane. Ellen would, she wrote, be thankful to get away from such a madhouse as Europe had become. *Damn them!* she wrote, *for starting a war just when I had planned a tour of Austria and Germany!*

There was hardness in that one line, of a new and amazing kind.

The entry into New York was made, due to Rebecca's shrewdness, the proper sort of event. Two women straight (as the newspaper men managed to make it seem) from the front line! Two women who had been detained as spies! Two women who were good for at least two columns of space, paid for at so much a line, not to speak of the large photograph showing them on the deck of the *Giuseppe Verdi* with a great black Swiss shepherd dog that belonged to Lilli Barr! Two women with (almost) the dust of the trenches on their shoulders! The papers were full of Lilli Barr, and Miss Rebecca Schönberg, her manager. Every one got something out of it. Lilli Barr got a vast amount of attention. Rebecca Schönberg found herself in the newspapers and rose correspondingly in the eyes of all the relatives and acquaintances, (there were Bettelheims and Czelovars and Schönbergs in New York as well as in London and Paris and Vienna) to whom she had been known until now as Raoul Schönberg's eccentric niece. The newspaper men earned extra money on space and the public had a first hand account of the war. It was all arranged magnificently. Lilli Barr got in under the line before the hundreds of other musicians who likewise damned the war and turned their faces toward a new world that had suddenly acquired an enormous importance.

Hattie Tolliver, dressed in shabby black, and weeping with joy, was on the pier, and with her, Robert, stolid and a little cynical of the grand manner with which his arrogant sister descended the gangplank. Seven trunks were gone through by customs men. Hattie Tolliver discovered that Miss Schönberg, instead of being a dark, sinister species of procuress, was red-haired, good-natured and immensely excited and triumphant. Robert, to his disgust, was told that he was quite a man, and Hattie was told that she was not a day older, that she must have a new hat . . . a half-dozen new hats . . . at once. And, at length, under the eyes of bedazzled fellow-passengers, the entire party, with immense gusto got under way.

It was all different from the damp December day when a lonely young widow, secretly terrified, waved farewell to Fergus as the doddering old *City of Paris* slipped away from the pier. It was not Ellen Tolliver who was returning. She had been left behind somewhere in Europe. It was Lilli Barr.

The seven trunks did not go to the apartment in the Seventies; they were sent instead to the Ritz, to the rooms arranged by Raoul Schönberg, the diamond merchant, in accordance with instructions from his niece. Miss Schönberg went with the trunks and the wolf-like dog, but Ellen, with her hand clasped in both her mother's, smiling in triumph beneath the gaze of her mother's tear-stained eyes, went straight to the apartment. All the way Robert sat opposite them, stolidly. He was the bourgeois member of the family. For him there were no transports of joy and sorrow, no wild soarings of delight, no gay irresponsibility, no intense passions, no violent depressions, no fierce desire to set off wandering about the earth. And so it happened that he, the most dependable, the most unselfish, was the one whom all the others took for granted. For him there would never be any celebration to mark the prodigal's return. Darkly he knew all this, and was in his quiet way, content. Somehow he had escaped the heritage of The Everlasting. Secretly he thought there was a great deal of bunk about Miss Schönberg and his sister Ellen; he suspected that their adventures had not been, in fact, so exciting as Miss Schönberg, with a magnificent embroidery of detail, made them seem.

Still, he knew nothing about their profession. Such nonsense might be necessary. Thank God, it was not necessary in the bond business to behave like a three ring circus!

It was long after midnight when Ellen at last joined her manager at the Ritz. Dressed in the smart clothes in which she left the ship, she remained at the apartment surrounded by her family, talking, laughing, even weeping a bit when the rich, violent emotion of her mother engulfed them all save Robert and The Everlasting in a sort of sentimental orgy. Gramp joined them too, for

in a city apartment it was no longer possible to keep him shut away as they had done in the days when he occupied a room above the kitchen.

There was but one thing to sadden the reunion; it was the absence of Fergus. Ellen learned for the first time, when she asked for him, that he had gone to Europe. It was rotten luck, because in the depths of her heart he was the one she had wanted to see above all the others. He would have appreciated the grandiose triumph of her return; he would have laughed at it but he would have understood the importance of the spectacle. He would have known how well it was done. She needed his little touch of mocking humor, his complete sympathy. . . . And now he was gone. There was even a chance that she might never see him again.

The others had no interest in the spectacle. Her mother, it was clear, was proud that she was famous; but she really cared nothing at all for Lilli Barr. It was Ellen Tolliver who absorbed them all. They wanted to recapture Ellen Tolliver, pin her down and keep her with them forever. And that, of course, could not be done, because there was so little of Ellen and so much of Lilli.

Once, as they talked frantically, she caught a sudden twinkle in the eye of The Everlasting as he sat, silent and mocking, a little beyond the border of the family group. It was a brief twinkle, which vanished as quickly as it had come, but it told her that he, like Fergus, understood. He knew that she had carried the war into the enemy's country and had won. They hadn't, after all, pulled her down and clipped her wings.

And then, during a brief silence, in the flood of talk there sounded through the room the familiar echo of his demoniacal chuckle. He was thinking, perhaps, of the winter night when he threw a fit and so allowed Ellen to escape.

The occasion was so great that Gramp was allowed to have his dinner with the rest of the family, a privilege which had not been granted in more than fifteen years; for on that first night Hattie would have welcomed the devil himself and placed him on

her right hand. Sitting there with his dim spectacles tilted on the end of his high thin nose, he watched them all without taking any part in the celebration. He listened while Ellen described Lily's house in the Rue Raynouard, and he understood, what the others failed to understand, that of course the Baron was Lily's lover. He saw quickly enough that Ellen had closed her eyes to all that took place in the lovely old house. And he knew what the others did not . . . that Ellen had not really returned to them at all, that she had learned the wisdom of going her own way and allowing others to do the same. She had, in short, discovered freedom; she had found her way about in a strange world and had learned the tricks which gave her the upper hand. He was proud of her to have been so smart, to have learned so quickly.

This was no longer the stormy, unhappy Ellen who had run away with a drummer. This was Lilli Barr, a woman of the world, hard, successful, with smooth edges. She glittered a bit. She was too slippery ever to recapture. She sat there, in her chic, expensive clothes, self-possessed, remote, smiling, and a little restless, as if she were impatient to be gone already back into the nervous, superficial clatter of the life which had swallowed her.

The others would discover all this in time, later on. The Everlasting knew it at once.

At one o'clock, Robert summoned a taxi and drove with her to the Ritz. It was a strange, silent ride in which the brother and sister scarcely addressed each other. They were tired, and they were separated in age by nearly ten years. (Robert had been but ten when Ellen eloped.) The one was an artist, caught up for the moment in the delirium of success. The other sold bonds and was working at it with a desperate, plodding persistence. They might, indeed, have been strangers.

Ellen, watching in silence the silhouette of her brother's snub nose and unruly red hair against the window of the taxicab, began to understand, with a perception almost as sharp as the old man's, what it was that had happened. It made her sad and a little fear-

ful lest she should discover that Rebecca had already gone to bed and she would find herself alone in the gaudy hotel. She was afraid, more and more of late, to be left alone.

Still, she reflected, there would be Hansi . . . for company . . . Hansi, a big, black, wolfish dog who devoted himself to her with a fanatic affection.

And the thought of Hansi turned her memories in the direction of Paris, which lay safe for the time being from the Germans; for Hansi reminded her always of Callendar and the day, just before they left for Vienna, when a fat little old man brought the dog with a note to the house in the Rue Raynouard. . . . A note which read . . . "I send you Hansi because he is like you. He will look well by your side and be devoted to you. He may remind you sometimes of me, even in the midst of wild applause. It would be easy now to forget one who has known since the beginning that you were a great artist.

C"

That was all . . . just a line or two, but enough to remind her of what she had forgotten—the awful sense of his patience, which seemed always to say with a shrug that all life was merely a matter of waiting.

The solid voice of Robert roused her.

"Here we are," he said, and stepping from the cab, she was washed for an instant by the brilliant white glare of electricity and then vanished through the whirling doors into the Ritz.

In all the hubbub of those busy, noisy days there were intervals when, for a moment, she found time for reflection . . . odd moments between tea and dinner, or in the hours after midnight when the roar of the city and the small revealing sounds of the great hotel had abated a little; or moments when Rebecca, buoyant, triumphant and full of business interviewed in the sitting room the men who came from musical papers suggesting a sort of polite blackmail. Rebecca handled them all beautifully because she had in her the blood of a hundred generations who had lived by barter.

So Ellen escaped them, save when it was necessary for her to be interviewed. Rebecca arranged the concerts that were to be given. She was busy, she was happy, she was content in her possession of Lilli Barr.

It occurred to Ellen after a time that she had not seen Mr. Wyck. In all the confusion there had been no mention of her mother's lodger. He had not been about. So when her mother came to lunch the next day in her sitting room at the Ritz, she asked, after the usual warm kisses had been exchanged, concerning the mysterious lodger.

"He went away the week before you arrived," said Hattie. "I could never understand why. He had seemed to be so satisfied."

Ellen endeavored to conceal her sense of pleasure at his disappearance. "Perhaps," she suggested, "he was leaving town."

Hattie frowned. "No. It wasn't that," she replied. "He said that he must have a room nearer his work. . . . It seemed a silly reason."

Ellen called Hansi to her side and the big black dog threw himself down with his head against her knee, his green eyes fastened on her face with a look of adoration. She stroked the fine black head and murmured, "You never told me his name."

"His name was Wyck," said Hattie. "We grew to be very fond of him. He was no trouble at all, though he did sometimes talk too much concerning his family. Still, I can see that he had nothing else to talk about. He didn't seem to have any friends but us. Fergus was the only one who didn't like him."

Ellen looked up suddenly. She had forgotten Fergus. She had forgotten that Wyck had seen him on the morning when Clarence lay dead on the divan in the Babylon Arms. Perhaps they did not remember each other. Certainly it was clear that Hattie knew nothing. Fergus must have known and, distrusting the nasty little man, have kept his secret. It was a strange world.

There was champagne that day for lunch because Rebecca had asked her uncle Raoul and his daughter, a handsome dark Jewess. Together they sat about a table laden with food which was rich

and bizarre to Hattie Tolliver. The sunlight streamed in at the windows and the waiters bobbed in and out of the room serving her daughter. The champagne she refused to drink and when the diamond merchant filled Ellen's glass, she frowned and said, "I wish you wouldn't drink, Ellen. You never know what it leads to."

And when Mr. Schönberg, after telling one or two risqué stories, held a match to Ellen's cigarette, Hattie frowned again and the old look of suspicion came into her eyes. It was Lily Shane who had taught her daughter to behave like a fast woman. She knew that.

It was only when the first excitement of Ellen's return had worn away that Hattie began to feel the dull ache of an unhappiness which she could neither understand nor define. With all the vast optimism of her nature she had fancied the return of Ellen as something quite different from the reality. A hundred times during the long years while her daughter was away, she lived through the experience in her imagination; she saw Ellen taking her place once more in the midst of the family, quarreling cheerfully with Robert, helping her mother about the house, going and coming as the mood struck her. She fancied that Ellen would be, as in the old days, sullen and sometimes unhappy but always dependent just the same, always a rather sulky little girl who would play the piano by the hour while her mother saw to it that there was no work, no annoyance to disturb her.

And now it was quite different. She scarcely saw Ellen save when she went to the Ritz to eat a hurried lunch of fancy, rich foods under the bright eyes of the cheerful Miss Schönberg. The old piano stood in the apartment, silent save when Hattie herself picked out her old tunes in a desperate attack of nostalgia. Ellen had played for her a half dozen times but always on the great piano in her sitting room at the Ritz; it was not the same as in the sentimental, happy days when Hattie, as ruler of her household, sat darning with her family all about her. There was no time

for anything. And Ellen herself . . . she had become slippery somehow, happier than in the old days, but also more remote, more independent, more "complete" as Lily had said. She had no need of any one.

There were days too when Hattie felt the absence of Mr. Wyck. Of all those who had at one time or another depended upon her . . . old Julia, Fergus, Ellen, Wyck and all the others . . . none remained save her husband. And somehow she had come to lose him too. Here in the city, living in his farm papers and in his memories, he had escaped her in a way she failed to understand. He slept more and more so that there were times when she was worried lest he might really be ill. Robert and The Everlasting were aloof and independent; they were no help whatever. But Mr. Wyck had come to her, wanting desperately all the little attentions which she gave so lavishly. And now he was gone, almost secretly and without gratitude. It hurt her because she could not understand why he had run away.

At times it seemed that with on one to lean upon her, the very foundations of her existence had melted away; there were moments when, for the first time in all her troubled and vigorous life, she feared that the world into which she had come might at last defeat her.

SCARCELY a week after the landing of Ellen and Rebecca, Thérèse Callendar landed in New York, almost willingly and with a sense of relief. In the solid house on Murray Hill, the usual army of charwomen arrived and put the place in order against her coming, but on her arrival she closed most of the rooms and chose to live between her bed-room and the library. She was, oddly enough, confused and a little weary. She had been, all her life, a match and more for the shrewdest of

men; she had outwitted bankers and brokers and even swindlers, and now she stood confronted by a catastrophe which she was unable to dominate. A third or more of a vast fortune stood in danger . . . that part of it which she had been unable to save when the maelstrom broke over Europe. Much of it, fortunately, was transferred into safety. Through bits of information and advice picked up here and there in the course of her wanderings, she had divined that one day there was certain to be a war, and accordingly she had taken money out of Germany and placed it in England, disposed of Russian bonds and reinvested the money in America, shifted credits from Vienna to Paris. Yet there still remained a great sum which, for the time being, was lost in the confusion . . . part of the fortune she had tended with the care of a gardener for his most prized orchid.

In the midst of the turmoil she had stayed for days in the office of her lawyer in Paris, wiring now to London, now to Trieste, now in New York—sitting with him, a shrewd, bearded man, in conference with bankers, brokers and men who simply juggled money into more money. And in the end even she, Thérèse Callendar, had been no match for the war. She wakened one morning to find the Germans at the gates of Paris and the Government fled to Bordeaux. She was alone; Richard and Sabine and little Thérèse were in England. So alone she had paced the tesselated floors of the monstrous house in the Avenue du Bois, until all had been done which could be done. And at last, glad to leave the Europe which Ellen had called a madhouse, she turned back for the first time in her life with pleasure and relief to the quiet of the brownstone house on Murray Hill.

She had come to New York, as may be said of great people, incognita. Only her banker and her lawyer knew she was in town—a strange state of affairs for a woman who had lived always in public, going from one capital to another, seeing scores of people day by day.

It was not the money alone which troubled her. There was

the matter of Sabine for which there seemed to be no solution. As she sat alone in the dark library three days after her arrival, she turned the matter over in her mind.

She thought of the interview which took place with Richard a day or two before the Archduke was shot in Serajevo . . . an interview which occurred after lunch in the house in the Avenue du Bois before he took the Boulogne express to join Sabine in Hertfordshire. Over her coffee, she saw him again . . . a dark handsome son of whom a mother might have been proud if he had cared more for the things which were the foundation of her life. There was bitter disappointment in all that . . . his neglect of business and his indifference to money. Here he was, a man of thirty-five, who did nothing but amuse himself. He gambled a bit, he bought a picture now and then, he had a passion for music, he fenced and swam and rode beautifully. Yet there seemed to be no core to his existence, no foundation, unless the satisfaction of his own desire for pleasure might be called the dominant thread of his character. It was satisfaction—no more than that: it was never satiation. If he had been weak or dissipated or a waster, there would have been more to be said against him; but he was none of these things. In this, fortunately, he took after her own people. He had not, like young Americans who had money, gone to pieces. He took good care of himself. He had no habit which had become a vice. He had all the curious strength that comes of an old race.

Sitting over her coffee, she saw him again as he stood with the old mocking smile on his too red lips while she argued across the spaces of Wolff's house in the Avenue du Bois. He stood, rocking a bit on his toes, with the easy grace which came of a supple strength, looking down at her out of the mocking gray eyes.

"But there is no one whom I want to marry," he had said, "even if Sabine would divorce me."

At which she had grown angry and retorted, "Women interest you. It would be easy enough. . . ."

"It would be a nasty, unpleasant business. She is not a bad

wife. I might do much worse. I am sorry that she can't have more children, but that is none of my doing. I do not want to hurt her. I might not have another wife as satisfactory."

To which Thérèse had replied, "She is unhappy. I know she is. She can't stand indifference forever, even if she is a cold woman. Besides she's in love with you. She can't go on always living with you and yet not living with you. She'd be happier free . . . to marry some one else."

Then he had mocked her out of the depths of his own security. "Do you think love is such a simple thing that it can be turned on and off like water from a tap?" (She knew that love with him was just that . . . something which could be turned on and off, like water from a tap.)

"Besides, it was *you* who wanted me to marry her. I had other ideas."

"You mean Ellen Tolliver?" she asked. And then, "You would not have married her if you could have escaped it . . . if you could have got her in any other way."

But she saw that the look of mockery had faded a little at the sound of the girl's name. (She was of course no longer a girl but a successful woman of thirty or more.)

"I don't know . . ." he had said, "I don't know what I should have done. Only I fancy that if I had married her there would have been a great many little heirs running about."

She had delivered herself into his hands. As a woman of affairs she knew that one could not argue sensibly about what might have happened; and for what had happened she herself was responsible. In that he had been right.

"Would you marry her to-day?"

"How can I answer that? Probably she wouldn't have me. Why should she? We're both different now. . . . It's been years. . . . She's rich now . . . successful . . . famous. It isn't the same."

"People don't change as much as that . . . especially if they have not seen each other. They are likely to keep a memory

of that sort always fresh. It's likely to grow strong instead of weak."

"I've seen her since . . . several times . . . at her concerts."

She saw, with her small piercing eyes, that she had uncovered a weak place in his armor . . . a single chance on which to pin all her hopes.

"Have you talked to her?"

"No."

She knew too that he was, in a sense, invincible. Sabine, so far as the world was concerned, made an excellent wife. She was worldly, distinguished, clever. So far as he was himself concerned, she gave him no trouble. She did not make scenes and she did not indulge in passionate outbreaks of jealousy. She did not even speak of the love which he sought outside his marriage . . . the intrigues that were always taking place and now made him invincible in the face of her argument. She effaced herself, and as she had done once before, waited. But on that occasion she had waited for marriage, and had won. Now she was waiting for love, which was quite a different matter.

"If it's an heir you want, I have one already." He smiled. "He must be nearly twelve by now. Of course, he is the grandson of a janitor and the son of a music hall singer. . . . Still, he is an heir. We might legitimize him."

By this stroke he had won, for he had made her angry . . . the thing he had been seeking to do all the while.

"I hear from him twice a year . . . when my lawyer sends his mother money."

"You'd do well to forget his existence."

And then they had talked for a time without arriving anywhere. As usual it was Richard who had won. He had gone back to Sabine as if nothing at all had occurred.

Thérèse drank the last of her coffee and then laid her dumpy figure down on the divan in the dark library. She was tired for the first time in her life, as if she had not the strength to go on

fighting. She might have but a few years longer to live and she must hurry and settle this matter. There must be an heir to whom she might pass on the fortune . . . not a sickly girl like little Thérèse but a man who could manage a responsibility so enormous.

Though her body was weary, her mind was alert. There still remained a chance. In the gathering darkness, she knew that the chance depended upon two things . . . the hope that Ellen Tolliver still loved Richard as she had so clearly loved him on the night years earlier when the girl had talked to her in this very room; and the hope that Lilli Barr was as honest, as respectable, as bourgeois as Ellen Tolliver had been.

She got up and in the darkness made her way to the bell. When the butler appeared and switched on the lights, she said, "Please get me a box for the concert of Lilli Barr. . . . It's a week from to-morrow." And, as he was leaving, she added, "I shall give a dinner that night. See to it that the rest of the house is got ready."

This was the first step.

48

ON the very same night in her weathered house sheltered by lilacs and syringas in the Town Miss Ogilvie, trembling and fluttering like a canary set free and preening itself in the sun, packed her trunk for the trip to the East. Any one looking on might have believed her, save for the wrinkled rosy cheeks and the slight spare figure, a young girl on the eve of her first party. After all, it was an event . . . the first trip she had made to the East since the Seventies when she had sailed as a girl for Munich. And she was going East to hear Ellen Tolliver play . . . Ellen who had been a chit of a girl when she had last seen her, Ellen who was now Lilli Barr, whose name and picture appeared everywhere in the papers, Ellen who had hid-

den on the night she fled the Town in the nest-like parlor of this very house.

Miss Ogilvie, packing her best taffeta with its corals and cameos to wear at the concert, indulged in an orgy of memories . . . memories that went back to the years before Ellen was born, to the days in Munich when for a delirious week, until the heavy hand of her father intervened, she had fancied she would become a great musician and play in public.

Pausing beside the old tin-bound trunk, she thought, "No, I never could have done it. I was too much a coward. But Ellen has . . . Ellen has. . . . And to think that I advised her to do it, that I told her to go ahead."

In the long span of a gentle life in which there had been no heights and no valleys, this occasion eclipsed all else . . . even the day she had herself sailed on the black *paquebot* for Europe.

"It happens like that . . . in the most unexpected places, in villages, in towns. . . . Why, even in a dirty mill town like this."

It all came back to her now, all the conversation between herself and Ellen on that last day when, weeping, she said to the girl, "I no longer count for anything. You are beyond me. Who am I to instruct you?"

And she remembered too with a sudden warmth the old bond between them, the hatred of this awful, sooty Town . . . a desert from which Ellen had boldly escaped, which Miss Ogilvie had accepted, hiding always in her heart her loathing of the place.

"And to think that she remembered me . . . a poor, insignificant old woman like me! To think that she even paid my way!"

For Miss Ogilvie could not have come otherwise. As the years passed she had grown poorer and poorer in her house behind the trees.

Her conscience pricked the old lady. "I wonder," she thought, sitting on the edge of her chair before the old trunk. "I wonder if I should confess to Hattie Tolliver that it was I who helped them to escape. It would be more honest, since I am going to stay with her."

And then she grew worried for fear Ellen might be ashamed of her in her old-fashioned taffeta with coral and cameo pins. Ellen had been living in Paris with Lily Shane; she would know all about the latest thing in clothes. And to convince herself that the dress was not too bad, she put it on and pinning fast the coral and cameos, stood before her glass, frizzing her hair and pulling the dress this way and that.

In the midst of these preparations, she was interrupted by the distant jangle of the bell and the sound caused her to blush and start as if she, an old dried-up woman, had been caught by an intruder coquetting before her mirror.

She knew who was at the door. It was Eva Barr and May Biggs come to send messages to Ellen, for they too shared a little her excitement. They would talk, the three of them, about Ellen as they remembered her until long after midnight; for all three hoped that Ellen might be induced to play in the Town, especially since there was such a fine new auditorium. They too had claims upon her, claims of friendship and blood and old associations.

49

ON the night of the concert Ellen wore a gown of crimson velvet, according to a plan of Rebecca who determined that the occasion should be a sensational one not to be forgotten. The house was filled and when Lilli Barr came through the door at the back of the stage there was a quick hush, a sudden breathlessness, caused not so much by her beauty (for she was never really beautiful in the sense that Lily was beautiful) but by the whole perfection of the picture. The crimson dress fitted her tightly and was sleeveless and cut low to show the perfection of her strong, handsome shoulders. Her black hair, so black that in the brilliant light which showered upon her from overhead (a device of Rebecca's) it appeared blue

as the traditional raven's wing. She wore it pulled back tightly from her smooth forehead and done in a small knot at the nape of the neck. In her ears she wore old Portuguese rings of paste and silver. She was superb, glittering, slender, strong, and possessed of the old brilliant power to distract thought and concentrate attention.

In that instant the battle was half won. There were those in the audience who felt that the mere sight of her was enough.

In her box on the first tier, Mrs. Callendar sat up with a start, raised her lorgnettes and said "Tiens! Quel chic!"

Beside her Mrs. Mallinson (the lady novelist) murmured, "Superb creature!" and the Honorable Emma Hawksby (back again to live off the Americans on the strength of being a niece to the disreputable Duke of Middlebottom) thought again that the big feet of Englishwomen were a serious hindrance and that perhaps her countrywomen went in too much for walking. The elderly rake, Wickham Chase, sighed bitterly at the tragedy of old age and the loss of vigor. Bishop Smallwood (whom Sabine had dubbed the Apostle to the Genteel) thought, "She looks like my wa'am friend, Mrs. Sigourney," but, considering the impression, thought better of it and said nothing, since Mrs. Sigourney had long since overplayed her game and become utterly *déclassée*. And the third, a nondescript bachelor, strove to peer between Mrs. Mallinson's supporting dog-collar and the bony back of the Honorable Emma Hawksby. If he had any thoughts at all, they were not very interesting; for thirty years he had been sitting in the back of boxes at plays, concerts and the opera, peering between plump backs and skinny ones.

Below them the audience stretched away row upon row, in dim lines marshaled into neat columns like an advancing army seen through a mist.

Mrs. Callendar thought, "Ah! She is magnificent. The transformation scarcely seems possible. . . . Still, the girl had it in her always." And a little voice kept saying to her, "You will win. She is an admirable pawn. You will succeed. You will

get what you want if you work hard enough and are clever about it."

Down among the dim rows spread out below them sat Hattie Tolliver, in a new gown chosen by Ellen. Large and vigorous she sat, looking a little like a powerful and eccentric duchess, by the side of Miss Ogilvie in her mauve taffeta with the corals and cameos, her thin hair done elaborately in a fashion she had not worn since she was a girl. They sat there, the eagle and the linnet, trembling with excitement, the tears very close to the surface of the emotional Hattie.

Presently, as Ellen took her place at the piano and struck a few crashing chords, Hattie could bear it no longer. She leaned toward the stranger at her side, a woman with short hair and an umbrella, and said in triumph, "That's my daughter who's playing."

The stranger stared at her for an instant and murmured, "Is it indeed?" And the music began.

Hattie really wanted to tell them all—the row upon row of strangers, obscured now by the darkness.

Charles Tolliver at his end of the row closed his eyes and slipped presently into the borderland between sleep and consciousness, a country where there is no reality and all is covered by a rosy mist. Through this the music came to him distantly. He fancied he was back once more in the shabby living room with Ellen playing sullenly at the upright piano. And for a little time he was happy.

Robert, who had no ear for music, felt uncomfortable and disapproved of his sister's low-cut gown. Robert was a prig; he took after his grandfather Barr, "the citizen."

The Everlasting was not to be seen. He had been left at home, because it was impossible to say how he would behave on such an occasion. One dared not take the risk.

In the mind of Hattie, sitting there in the shadows of the great hall, there could be no question of failure. Was it not

her Ellen, her little girl whom she had once held upon her knee, who now sat, as it were, upon a throne before a world which listened breathlessly? All those people who filled the seats about her and above her might have risen and left, but to Hattie the evening would have been a great success, a triumph in which the judgment of the world had been wrong. They did not leave; instead they sat, leaning forward a bit or slipped down in their seats with closed eyes, bedazzled as much by the perfection and grace of this new musician as by the music itself.

Rebecca, standing in the darkness at the back of the great hall, understood all that. She knew that in part the triumph was her own, for had she not tricked them, hypnotized them? They would not be able to forget. She, like Hattie, felt with every fiber of her body, the very sensations of all those people who listened—people from great houses of the rich who had heard of Lilli Barr from friends in Europe, people from the suburbs who would rush away in frantic haste for the last train home, people—young people—like the one who sat next to Hattie, in shabby clothes and worn shoes, who were fighting now desperately, as Ellen had once fought, to reach that same platform, that same brilliant shower of light. They listened, enchanted by the sound, caught by the spell of one woman's genius and another's brilliant trickery. Possessed they were, for the moment.

And presently the tears began to stream down Hattie's face. They dropped to the hands worn and red, concealed now by the expensive gloves which cramped her uncomfortably.

The applause rose and fell in great waves, sweeping over her with the roaring of a great surf heard far away, and through it the voice of Miss Ogilvie, saying gently, "Who would have believed it?"

And then at length, when the sound of the last number had died away, an overwhelming surf which would not die even when the woman in crimson appeared again and again under the brilliant shower of light; until at last Lilli Barr seated herself before the

great satiny piano and the crowd, which had pushed forward to the stage, grew quiet and stood listening, waiting, silent and expectant . . . the people from great houses, the people from the suburbs, the young people with worn shoes and shabby clothes. And into the air there rang a shower of spangled notes, gay and sparkling, embracing a rhythm older than any of them. For Lilli Barr—(or was it Ellen Tolliver)—was playing now *The Beautiful Blue Danube*. It was not the old simple waltz that Hattie had picked out upon the organ in her father's parlor, but an extravagant, brilliant arrangement which beneath the strong, white fingers became fantastical and beautiful beyond description.

Hattie Tolliver wept because she understood. It was as if Ellen—the proud, silent Ellen—had been suddenly stripped of all the old inarticulate pride, as if suddenly she had grown eloquent and all the barriers, like the walls of Jericho, had tumbled down. Hattie Tolliver understood. Her daughter was speaking to her now across all the gulf of years, across the hundred walls which stood between them. This was her reward. She understood and wept at the sudden revelation of the mysterious thread that ran through all life. All this triumph, this beauty, all this splendor had its beginning long ago on the harmonium in the parlor of old Jacob Barr's farm.

When the lights went up and Hattie, drying her eyes and suffering her hand to be patted by Miss Ogilvie, was able to look about her, she saw with a feeling of horror among the figures crowded in a group before the stage a coonskin coat and a sharp old face that was familiar. It was *The Everlasting*. He had come, after all, alone, aloof, as he had always lived. He stood with his bony old head tilted back a little, peering through his steel rimmed spectacles at the brilliant figure of his granddaughter.

For an instant Hattie thought, triumphantly, "Now he can see that my child is great. That she is famous. He will see," she thought, "what a good mother I have been."

But her sense of triumph was dimmed a little because she

knew that Ellen belonged also to him . . . all that part which she had never been able to understand. It was Gramp's triumph as well as Hattie's. To her horror she heard him shouting, "Bravo! Bravo!" in a thin, cracked voice, as if he were a young man again listening while Liszt played to an audience of foreigners.

In the box, looking down on the crowd below, Thérèse Calendar waited to the end. She sent Mrs. Mallinson, the Honorable Emma Hawksby, the Apostle to the Genteel, Wickham Chase and the nondescript bachelor away in her motor, bidding the driver return for her. She sat peering down through her lorgnettes, plump and secure in her sables and dirty diamonds, a little bedazzled like all the others but still enough in control of her senses to be interested in the figures below. Among them she too noticed the extraordinary figure of a skinny old man in a coon-skin coat, who stood a little apart from the others with a triumphant smile on his sharp, wrinkled face.

At the moment she was in an optimistic mood because there had occurred in the course of the concert an incident which, with all the rich superstition of her nature, she interpreted as a good omen. Between the two parts of the program when dozens of bouquets (mostly purchased by Rebecca) were rushed forward to the platform, she saw that Lilli Barr leaned down and chose a great bunch of yellow roses. It was the bouquet which Thérèse had sent. It was an omen. If there had been any wavering in the mind of Thérèse it vanished at once. Ellen could not consciously have chosen it. She was sure now that she would succeed.

Behind the stage whither she turned her steps when the last of the applause had died away and the lights were turned out, she found Ellen standing surrounded by a noisy throng. Among them she recognized only Sanson, who had grown feeble and white since last she saw him. And there was an extraordinary, powerful woman, handsome in a large way, who wore her white

gloves awkwardly; and beside her a little old spinster in an absurd gown of mauve taffeta adorned with cameos and coral pins. These two stood beside the musician, the one proud and smiling, the other a little frightened, as a bird might be.

It was all exciting. Thérèse waited on the edge of the throng until all had gone save the big handsome woman and the little spinster in mauve. Then she stepped forward and saw that Ellen recognized her.

"Ah," said Ellen, coldly. "Mrs. Callendar! Were you here too?"

Thérèse did not say that the concert was magnificent. She knew better than to add one more to the heap of garish compliments. She said, "It was the first time I have been where I could hear you. I knew you would do it some day. . . . You remember, I told you so."

There was a look in Ellen's eye which said, "Ah! You forgot me for years. Now that I am successful everything is different." Then drawing her black cloak about her crimson dress, she laid a hand on the arm of the big, handsome woman.

"This is my mother . . . Mrs. Callendar," she said. "And this is Miss Ogilvie, my first music teacher."

Mrs. Tolliver eyed Thérèse with suspicion, and Miss Ogilvie simpered and bowed.

"I came back to ask you to come home to supper with me," said Mrs. Callendar to Ellen. "We could have a sandwich and a glass of sherry and talk for a time. I've opened the house."

For a moment the air was filled with a sense of conflict. The suspicion of Hattie, as she saw her daughter slipping from her, rose into hostility. In the end she lost, for Ellen said, "Yes, I'll come for a little time." And then turning to her mother, she added, "You and Miss Ogilvie go to the Ritz. I'll come there later. Rebecca has ordered supper."

But it was not Thérèse Callendar who won. It was some one

who was not there at all . . . a dark man of whose very existence Hattie Tolliver had never heard.

50

MEANWHILE in the front of the concert hall a little man whom none of them had seen slipped away before the lights came up, into the protecting darkness of the street. He had come in late to sit far back in the shadow beneath the balcony. Rebecca had noticed him, for he sat almost beside her and behaved in a queer fashion; but never having seen him before, she gave the matter no further thought. In the midst of the concert he had suddenly begun to weep, snuffling and drying his eyes with a furtive shame. He was a small man with a sallow face and shifting eyes which looked at you in a trembling, apologetic fashion (a trick that had come over him in the years since he had been driven from the comfortable flat on the top floor of the Babylon Arms). Rebecca, of course, had never heard of Mr. Wyck, yet she noticed him now because he fidgeted with his umbrella and because his hands trembled violently when he held his handkerchief to his eyes. He appeared, in his sniveling, frightened way, to be deeply affected by the music.

He went out quickly, among the first, looking behind him as if he stood in terror of being recognized and accused before all those people. Once in the street, he drew his shabby overcoat close about him, and turned his steps southward with such speed that at times the passers-by glared at him for jostling them at the crossings. They must have thought too, when he looked at them, that there was a reflection of madness in the staring eyes. He plunged south into the glare of light that pierced the darkness above Broadway like a pillar of fire.

He had seen her again . . . the one woman whom he hated above all persons on earth. He would have killed her. It would have given him pleasure to see her die, but as he ran, he knew that

he had not the courage. He thought, "I could not bear to face her even for the moment before I struck. I could not bear the look in her eyes" . . . (the old look of contempt and accusation, as if she knew what it was he had told Clarence). . . .

He was gone now . . . Clarence. Perhaps one might find him on the other side.

On and on he ran past brilliant pools of light, red and purple, green and yellow; past lurid posters adorning movie palaces showing men in death cells and women being carried down ladders in the midst of flames; past billboards on which extravagantly beautiful women kicked naked legs high in the air (they were not for him, whose only knowledge of love was that feeble flicker of affection he had had for Clarence); past rich motors filled with furs and painted women; past restaurants and hotels glittering with light from which drifted faintly the sounds of wild music; past all this until he emerged at last from the phantasmagoria in which he had no part, into the protective murkiness of a street which led west toward the North River . . . a street which began in delicatessen and clothing shops and degenerated slowly into rows of shabby brownstone houses, down-at-the-heel and neglected with the placards of chiropractors and midwives and beauty doctors thrust behind dusty lace curtains.

He hurried now, more rapidly than ever, with the air of a terrified animal seeking its burrow, to hide away from all that world of success and wealth and vigor that lay behind him.

She had come (he thought) out of the middle west, knowing nothing, bringing nothing, to destroy Clarence and win all that he had seen to-night. She had trampled them all beneath her feet. And what had he? Mr. Wyck? Nothing! Nothing! Only the obscenities of a boarding house into which she had driven him a second time. It was like all women. They preyed upon men. They destroyed them. And she had been vulgar and stupid and awkward. . . .

At last he turned in at a house which bore a placard "Rooms to Let." There he let himself in with a key and hurried up the

gas-lit stairs pursued by a gigantic shadow cast by the flickering of a flame turned economically low.

His room lay at the end of the top floor passage beyond the antiquated bathroom with its tin tub. Once inside, he bolted the door and flung himself down on the blankets of his bed to weep. A light, brilliant but far away, cast the crooked outline of an ailanthus tree against the faded greasy paper of the room. A cat, lean and adventurous, moved across the sill, and a cat fifty times its size moved in concert across the wall at the foot of the bed. Amid the faint odors of onions and dust, Mr. Wyck wept pitifully, silently.

For a long time he lay thus, tormented by memories of what he had seen . . . the crowd cheering and applauding, the woman in crimson and diamonds (an evil creature, symbol of all the cruelties which oppressed him). There were memories too that went back to the days at the Babylon Arms before she had come out of the west to destroy everything, days when Clarence, succumbing to the glamour of a name, had treated him as if he were human . . . days which had marked the peak of happiness. Since then everything had been a decline, a slipping downward slowly into a harsh world where there was no place for him. . . .

After a time, he grew more calm and lay with the quiet of a dead man, staring at the shadows on the wall until at last he raised himself and sat on the edge of the bed, holding his head in his thin hands. It was midnight . . . (a clock somewhere in the distance among all those lights sounded the hour slowly) . . . when he again stirred and, taking up from the bed an old newspaper, set himself to tearing it slowly into strips. He worked with all the concentration of a man hypnotized, until at last the whole thing had been torn into bits. Then he went to the window and with great care stuffed each tiny crevice in the rattling frame. In the same fashion he sealed the cracks about the sagging door. And when he had done this he approached the jet on which he was accustomed to heat the milk which made him sleep. But to-night the bottle of milk was left in its corner, un-

touched. He glanced at it and, after a moment's thought, reached up and slowly turned the knob of the jet until the gas began to hiss forth into the tiny room. When he had done all this he returned to the bed and, wrapping himself in his overcoat, lay down in peace. He did not weep now. He was quite calm. He came very close to achieving dignity. He waited. . . .

Outside the adventurous cat set up an amorous wail. The shadows danced across the wall-paper in a fantastic procession, and presently as if by a miracle their place was taken by another procession quite different—a procession in which there were ladies in crinolines out of the portraits which had once known the grandeur of a house on lower Fifth Avenue, and men in trousers strapped beneath their boots and even a carriage or two drawn by bright, prancing horses . . . a dim procession out of the past. And presently the second procession faded like the first. The walls of the room melted away. There was a great oblivion, a peace, an endless space where one stood alone, very tall and very powerful. . . . A great light and through a rosy mist the sound of a tom cat's amorous wail, more and more distant, raised in an ironic hymn of love to accompany the passing of Mr. Wyck, for whom there was no place in this world.

51

THE sound of the same clock striking midnight failed to penetrate the thick old curtains muffling the library on Murray Hill. Here Thérèse and Ellen sat talking, almost, one might have said, as if nothing had happened since Ellen last passed through the bronze door on her way to the Babylon Arms. Under the long, easy flow of Thérèse's talk her irritation had dissolved until now, two hours after the concert, they faced each other much as they had done long ago. It was Ellen who had changed; Thérèse was older, a little weary, and a trifle more untidy but otherwise the same—shrewd, talkative, her brisk mind

darting now here, now there, like a bright minnow, seeking always to penetrate the shiny, brittle surfaces which people held before them as their characters. She found, no doubt, that Ellen had learned the trick of the shiny, brittle surface; she understood that it was by no means as easy as it had been to probe to the depths the girl's inmost thoughts. She had learned to protect herself; nothing could hurt her now unless she chose to reveal a weakness in her armor. Thérèse understood at once that if her plan was to succeed, it must turn upon Ellen's own volition; the girl (she was no longer a girl but Thérèse still thought of her in that fashion) could not be tricked into a bargain. Beyond all doubt she understood that Richard was dangerous, that he had the power of causing pain.

As they talked, far into the night, Thérèse fancied that Ellen sat there—so handsome in the long crimson gown, so self-possessed, so protected by the shiny, brittle surface—weighing in her mind the question of ever seeing him again. They did not approach the topic openly; for a long time Thérèse chattered, in the deceptive way she had, of a thousand things which had very little to do with the case.

"You have seen Sabine now and then," she put forward, cautiously.

"Two or three times. She called on me."

Thérèse chuckled quietly. "She must admire you. It is unusual for her to make an advance of that sort."

The observation drew just the answer she had hoped for, just the answer which Ellen, thinking perhaps that the whole matter should be brought out into the light, saw fit to give.

"It was not altogether admiration," she said. "It was more fear. You see, she had imagined a wonderful story . . . a story that he had brought me to Paris, and that I was his mistress."

For a moment Ellen felt a twinge of conscience at breaking the pledge of confidence she had given Sabine. Still, she must use the weapons at hand. She understood perfectly that there was something they wanted of her; she understood that any of them

(save only Callendar himself) would have sacrificed her to their own schemes. He would sacrifice her only to himself.

"She was a little out of her head, I think . . . for a long time after little Thérèse was born. She grieved too because she could never have another child. She wanted to give Dick an heir. . . . She was very much in love with him . . . then." The last word she added, as if by an afterthought.

At this Ellen thrust forward another pawn, another bit of knowledge which had come to her from Sabine. "He neglects her badly, doesn't he?"

Thérèse pursed her lips and frowned, as if for a moment the game had gotten out of hand. "I don't fancy it's a case of neglect. . . . They're simply not happy. You see, it was not . . ." She smiled with deprecation. "Shall I be quite frank? It was not a matter of love in the beginning. . . . It was a *mariage de convenance*."

"Yes. He told me that . . . himself. Before the wedding took place."

There was a light now in Ellen's eye, a wicked gleam as if the game were amusing her tremendously, as if she found a mischievous delight in baiting this shrewd old woman with bits of knowledge which showed her how little she really knew of all that had taken place.

"Of course," Thérèse continued, "she fell in love with him after a time. . . . But for him it was impossible. . . . You see, there is only one person with whom he has ever really been in love. It was a case of fascination. . . ."

Ellen did not ask who this person was because she knew now, beyond all doubt. She had a strange sense of having lived all this scene before, and she knew that it was her sense of drama which was again giving her the advantage; once before it had saved her when her will, her conscious will, had come near to collapse. (Long ago it was . . . in the preposterous Babylon Arms which Clarence had thought so grand.)

"He gave me a dog," she said, by way of letting Mrs. Callendar

know that she understood who the mysterious person was. "Just before I left for Vienna. . . . I have him here with me, at the Ritz. He is very like Richard. . . ."

Mrs. Callendar poured out more sherry. She felt the need of something to aid her. And then she emerged abruptly, after the law of tactics which she usually followed, into the open.

"I don't mind saying, my dear, that you're the one who has fascinated him . . . always."

Ellen smiled coldly. "He is not what one might call a passionate lover."

"He is faithful."

Ellen's smile expanded into a gentle laugh. "One might call it, I suppose, . . . a fidelity of the soul, . . . of the spirit, a sublimated fidelity." There crept into her voice a thin thread of mockery, roused perhaps by the memory of Sabine's confidences.

Thérèse shrugged her fat shoulders and the movement set the plastron of dirty diamonds all a-glitter. "That is that," she observed. "You know him as well as I do."

("Better," thought Ellen, "so much better, because I know how dangerous he is.") But she kept silent.

"I think he would marry you to-morrow . . . if you would have him."

For an instant Ellen came very near to betraying herself. She felt the blood rise into her face. She felt a sudden faintness that emerged dimly from the memories of him as a lover, so charming, so subtle, so given to fierce, quick waves of passion.

"Did he send you to tell me that?" she asked in a low voice.

"No. . . . But I know it just the same. I have talked to him . . . not openly, of course."

("No," thought Ellen, "not openly, but like this, like the way you are talking to me." It was dangerous, this business of insinuation.)

"It is remarkable that the feeling has lasted so long . . . so many years," Thérèse continued. "It has not been like that with

any other woman. I think he is fascinated by your will, your power, your determination."

"You make me a great person," observed Ellen with irony, "but not a very seductive one."

"There are ways and ways of seduction. What seduces one man passes over the head of another."

"It is a perverse attraction. . . ."

"Perhaps. . . . But most attractions are."

Thérèse had seen the sudden change at the mention of her son's name, just as she had seen the change in her son when Ellen's name had been brought into the light. She meditated for a time in silence and then observed, "You are looking tired to-night."

There were dark circles under Ellen's eyes, pale evidences of the strain, the excitement which had not abated for an instant since they embarked for Vienna.

"I am tired," she said, "very tired."

"You should rest," pursued Thérèse. "You could go to the place on Long Island. You could be alone there, if you liked. I shouldn't bother you. I shall be busy in town until this tangle over money is settled."

Ellen stirred and sighed. "No, that's impossible. It's good of you to offer it, but I can't accept. . . . I can't stop now. You see the ball has been started rolling. One must take advantage of success while it's at hand. Never let a chance slip past. I know that . . . by experience. You see, Miss Schönberg—she's my manager—has arranged a great many engagements."

"Whenever you want a place to rest," continued Thérèse, "let me know."

It was true that she was tired, bitterly tired; and more troubling, more enduring than the mere exhaustion was the obscure feeling that she had passed from one period of her life into another, that she had left behind somewhere in these three exciting years a milestone that marked the borderland of youth, of that first, fresh,

exuberant youth which, at bottom, had been the source of all her success. It had slipped away somehow, in the night, without her knowing it. She was still strong (she knew that well enough), still filled with energy, but something was gone, a faint rosy mist perhaps, which had covered all life, even in the bitterest moments, with a glow that touched everything with a glamorous unreality, which made each new turning seem a wild adventure. It was gone; life was slipping past. Here she sat, a woman little past thirty, and what had she gained in exchange? Fame, perhaps? And wealth, which lay just around the next corner? Something had escaped her; something which in her mind was associated dimly with Lily and the memory of the pavilion silvered by the moon.

She stirred suddenly. "I must go. My mother and Miss Ogilvie are waiting at the Ritz."

She rose and Thérèse pulled herself with an heroic effort from the depths of her chair. Together they walked through the bleak, shadowy hall and at the door Mrs. Callendar said, "You will come to dinner with me some night . . . yes? I will ring you up to-morrow."

And as Ellen moved away down the steps, she added, "Remember, you must not overwork. . . . You must care for yourself. You are not as young as you were once."

It was that final speech *You are not as young as you were once* which, like a barbed arrow, remained in her mind and rankled there as she drove in the Callendar motor through the streets to the Ritz where she found her mother and Miss Ogilvie sitting sleepily with an air of disapproval while Sanson and Rebecca and Uncle Raoul drank champagne and labored to be gay in celebration of the triumph.

It was about this hour that the amorous wailing of the tom-cat died forever upon the ears of Mr. Wyck.

In the morning the newspapers printed, in the column devoted to murders, suicides and crimes of violence, a single paragraph——

"Herbert Wyck, aged forty-three, single, committed suicide last night by inhaling gas in his room in a boarding house at — West 35th street. The only existing relative is Miss Sophronia Wyck residing in Yonkers. It is said that the dead man's family once played a prominent part in the life of New York in the Seventies."

But no one saw it . . . not Hattie Tolliver, nor her husband, nor Robert, nor Ellen; they were all busy reading the triumphant notices of the concert at which, more than one critic said, a new Tèresa Carreño had arrived.

Thus passed Mr. Wyck whose one happiness was desolated because Lily Shane had encountered Clarence Murdock in the dining car of a transcontinental train. "Women like that," Harvey Seton had said. . . .

Ellen went to dine in the ugly dining room copied from the Duc de Morny not once but many times and she met there those people—Mrs. Mallinson, the Honorable Emma, the Apostle to the Genteel, Mr. Wickham Chase and scores of others—who had once sat on the opposite side of the lacquered screen waiting for the Russian tenor, the Javanese dancer and the unknown young American girl. She sat at dinner between bankers and bishops, between fashionable young men and elderly millionaires. She was a success, for she possessed an indifference bordering upon rudeness which allowed her dinner companions to talk as much as they pleased about themselves and led them into extraordinary efforts to win a gleam of interest from her clear blue eyes. And she learned that many things had changed since she last dined in the Callendar house. She learned that Mrs. Sigourney was no longer fashionable but merely material for the newspapers, and that Mrs. Champion and her Virgins had sunk into a brownstone obscurity in the face of a new age which no longer had a great interest in virginity; and that artists, musicians and writers were becoming the thing, that no dinner was complete without them. But it was amazing how little the whole spectacle interested her. She knew that it had all been arranged with a purpose; the indomitable

Thérèse, for all her fatigue and worry, was preparing for the next step. These dinners gave Lilli Barr a place in the world of the Honorable Emma and the Apostle to the Genteel; they fixed her.

52

THE first letter from Lily since Ellen had left the house in the Rue Raynouard for Vienna arrived on the eve of her departure from New York for the West. It was a sad letter, tragic and strangely subdued for one so buoyant, so happy as Lily to have written. Still, there were reasons . . . reasons which piled one upon another in a crescendo of sorrow and tragedy. It was, as Ellen remarked to Rebecca while they sat at breakfast in the bright sitting room, as if the very foundations of Lily's life had collapsed.

César was missing. "I have given up hope," wrote Lily, "of seeing him again. Something tells me that he is dead, that even if he were a prisoner I should have heard from him. I know he is gone. I saw him on the night he went into action. His troop passed through Meaux in the direction of the Germans and he stopped for five minutes . . . five precious minutes . . . at Germigny. And then he rode away into the darkness. . . . I am certain that he is dead."

Nor was this all. Madame Gigon too was dead. With Lily she had been trapped in the house at Germigny, too ill to flee. The Germans had entered the park and the château and spent a night there. Before morning they were driven out again. During that night Madame Gigon had died. She was buried now in the family grave at Trilport, nearby.

And Jean . . . the Jean (eighteen now) who was such a friend of Ellen's, who had ridden wildly through the Bois and through the fields at Germigny, was in the hospital. He had been with César's troop. César had pledged himself to look out for the boy. But César had vanished during the first skirmish with the

Uhlans. Jean had lost him, and now Jean lay in the hospital at Neuilly with his left leg amputated at the knee.

"I am back in the Rue Raynouard," wrote Lily, "but you can imagine that it is not a happy place. I am alone all day and when I go out, I see no one because all the others are busy with the war, with their own friends and relations. Many of them have gone to the country because living has become very dear in Paris. We are safe again, but I am alone. There is not much pleasure here. I too have been very ill. I know now what a stranger I have always been. I am American still, despite everything. They know it too and have left me alone."

When Rebecca had gone, bustling and rather hard, out into the streets, Ellen sat for a long time with Hansi beside her, holding the sad letter in her hands. This, then, was what had happened to Lily's world, a world which, protected by wealth, had seemed so secure, so far beyond destruction. In a single night it was gone, swept away like so much rubbish out of an open door. Only Jean was left; and Jean, who loved life and activity and movement, was crippled now forever.

Moved by an overwhelming sadness, Ellen reproached herself for having been rude to old Madame Gigon, for having quarreled with César. She had been unpleasant to them because (she considered the thing honestly now, perhaps for the first time) because the one had been of no use to her and the other had threatened to stand in her way. She knew too for the first time how much Lily had loved her César. In her letter she made no pretenses; she was quite frank, as if after what had happened it was nonsense, pitiful nonsense, any longer to pretend. They were lovers; they had loved each other for years . . . it must have been nearly twelve years of love which stood blocked by César's sickly wife. There was, Ellen owned, something admirable in such devotion, still more when there was no arbitrary tie to bind them, the one to the other.

She rose presently and began to pace up and down the sunlit room, the black dog following close at her heels, up and down, up

and down, up and down. And the weariness, the strange lack of zest, which she had spoken of to Mrs. Callendar, took possession of her once more. She was, in the midst of her triumph, surrounded by the very clippings which acclaimed her, afraid with that curious fear of life which had troubled her since the beginning. It was a hostile world in which one must fight perpetually, only to be defeated in the end by some sinister thrust of circumstance . . . a thrust such as had destroyed all Lily's quiet security. It was well indeed to have humility.

She remembered too that Fergus was caught up in the torrent which had swept away so much that Lily held dear. . . . Fergus and (she halted abruptly in her restless pacing and grew thoughtful) Fergus and Callendar, the two persons in all the world whom she loved best. In the terror of the moment, she was completely honest. She loved Callendar. If there had ever been any doubt, she knew it now. She did not, even to save her own emotions, to shield her own vanity, put the thing out of her mind. She gave herself up to the idea.

In her restless pacing, she fancied that she must do something. She must save them—Callendar and Fergus—by some means; but like Thérèse in her anxiety over her fortune, like Hattie in her desperation, she found herself defeated. There was nothing to be done. This gaudy show, this spectacle, this glittering circus parade which crossed the face of Europe could not be blocked. She could not save them because they preferred the spectacle to anything in all the world. Ah, she knew them both! . . . She knew what it was in them that was captured and held fast by the spectacle. She knew that if she had been a man, she too would have been there by their side. They must be in the center of things, where there was the most going on, the one aloof, the other fairly saturated in the color, the feel, the very noise of the whole affair. It was a thirst for life, for a sense of its splendor. . . . She knew what it was because she too was possessed by it. It had nothing to do with patriotism; that sort of emotion was good enough for the French.

Like Hattie, like Thérèse, like a million other women she was helpless, and the feeling terrified her, who had never been really helpless before. This war, which she had damned for a nuisance that interrupted her own triumphant way, became a monster, overwhelming and bestial, before which she was powerless. And in her terror she was softened by a new sort of humanity. She became merely a woman whose men were at war, a woman who could do nothing, who must sit behind and suffer in terror and in doubt.

Rebecca found her there when she returned at three o'clock, still pacing up and down, up and down, the great black dog following close at her heels. She had not lunched; she had not thought of eating.

"The letter from Lily," she told Rebecca, with an air of repression, "has upset me. I don't know what I'm to do. I want to go back to Paris."

The statement so astounded Rebecca that she dropped the novels and papers she was carrying and stood staring.

"What!" she cried, "Go back now? Sacrifice everything we have worked for? Ruin everything? Give up all these engagements? You must be mad."

It was plain that Ellen had thought of all this, that the struggle which she saw taking form with Rebecca had already occurred in her own soul. She knew what she was sacrificing . . . if she returned.

"Lily is alone there, and in trouble. Some one should go to her."

So that was it! Rebecca's tiny, bright ferret's eyes grew red with anger. "Lily! Lily!" she said. "Don't worry about Lily. I'll wager by this time she has found some one to console her."

Ellen moved toward her like a thunder cloud, powerful, menacing in a kind of dignity that was strange and even terrifying to Rebecca. "You can't say that of her. I won't have you. How can you when it was Lily who has helped me more than

any one in the world? I won't have it. Who are you to speak like that of Lily . . . my own cousin?"

"Lily who has helped you!" screamed Rebecca. "And what of me? What of me?" She began to beat her thin breasts in a kind of fury. Her nose became a beak, her small eyes red and furious. "Have I done nothing? Am I no one, to be cast aside like this? What of the work I have done, the slaving?"

For a moment they stood facing each other, silent and furious, close in a primitive fashion to blows. There was silence because their anger had reached a point beyond all words and here each held herself in check. It was Ellen who broke the silence. She began to laugh, softly and bitterly.

"Perhaps you're right," she said in a low voice. "I do owe you a great deal . . . as much, really, as I owe to Lily. It has given you the right to a certain hold upon me."

(But the difference, she knew, was this—that Lily would never exert her right of possession.)

"You can't go," continued Rebecca, "not now. Think of it . . . all the years of sacrifice and work, gone for nothing. Can't you see that fate has delivered triumph into your hands. If you turn your back upon it now, you'd be nothing less than a fool." She saw in a sudden flash another argument and thrust it into the conflict. "Always you have taken advantage of opportunity. . . . You told me so yourself. . . . And now when the greatest chance of all is at hand, you turn your back on it. I can't understand you. Why should you suddenly be so thoughtful of Lily?"

Ellen sat down and fell to looking out of the window. "Perhaps you're right," she said. "I'll think it out . . . more clearly perhaps."

There was, after all, nothing that she could do. The old despair swept over her, taking the place of her pessimistic anger. She could not go to the front, among the soldiers, to comfort Callendar. He would have been the last to want her there.

"Perhaps you're right," she repeated, and then, "War is a rotten thing for women."

But Rebecca had, all the same, a feeling that it was not Lily whom she was fighting but some one else—whom, she could not imagine. She could not have known of course that Thérèse Callendar had already written her son that she had seen Ellen Tolliver, that she was handsomer than ever and more fascinating and sullen, and that in a sly postscript she had remarked, "The strange thing is that I believe she is still in love with you. I watched her, out of curiosity, and I am sure of it."

And, of course, none of them knew that Callendar on reading the letter somewhere in the mud near Loos, with the throbbing of the barrage in his ears, had smiled at the trickery of women and thought, "Curiosity, indeed!"

It was in the end Rebecca who won, not a victory perhaps but at least a delay. The little Jewess was much too shrewd ever to suppose that Ellen might be conquered so easily; if she had won a temporary advantage she understood it was because Ellen chose to let her win, because Ellen had weighed the question and decided that all things considered, Rebecca was right. To turn back at this point was a folly which she could not deny. Belonging now in a sense to the whole world she was no longer absolute mistress of her own fortune; such freedom was, after all, the privilege only of the obscure. She was in truth, she thought bitterly, still a mountebank, an entertainer, who waited behind a painted screen to entertain the public. The stage was greater now and the audience had grown from the fashionable little group in the Callendar drawing-room to all the world. That was the only difference.

But stronger than any sense of duty or obligation was the old terror of a terrible poverty which forced one to keep up appearances. She had tasted the security that comes of riches and she could not turn back. There were memories which would not die, memories of the days when as a girl she had put on a bold face

before all the Town, memories, even worse, of the drab petty economies she had known in the days at the Babylon Arms. And even stronger than all these things was her fear of failure, a passionate fear which might easily have driven her in some circumstances to suicide. One who had been so ruthless, so arrogant, so proud, dared not fail. That way too had been blocked.

So she found herself brought up sharply against the problem of the Town. They wanted her there; they were, strangely enough, proud of her. Eva Barr had written her, and Miss Ogilvie, and even May Biggs, whom she had feared ever to see again. She had left them all believing that she would never turn back, believing that by stepping aboard the express for the East she had turned her back forever upon a place which, in honest truth, she despised. But she had not escaped; there were ties, intangible and tenuous, which bound her to the place. There were times when she was even betrayed by a certain nostalgia for the sight of the roaring black furnaces, the dark empty rooms of Shane's Castle, closed now and barren of all life; the decaying smoke-stained houses that stood far back from the streets surrounded by green lawns and old trees.

She thought, "This again is a sign that something has gone from me, something fierce and spirited. I am growing softer."

They had, so May Biggs wrote, built a new concert hall, and what could be so appropriate as to have it opened by a daughter of the Town? "A daughter of the Town," she reflected bitterly. "Yes, I am that. It, too, claims me."

And it was true. She was a daughter of the Town. There was in her the same fierce energy, the same ruthlessness, the same pride. If she had been born elsewhere, in some less harsh and vigorous community, she would herself have been softer, less overwhelmingly successful. It was true. She *was* a daughter of the hard, uncompromising Town.

"*It happens like that . . .*" Miss Ogilvie had said, "*in the most unexpected places . . . in villages, in towns. . . . Why, even in a dirty mill town like this.*"

But in the end, it was her pride which led her back. Because, a dozen years ago, she had talked wildly and desperately, because she had boasted of what she would one day do, she must return now to let them see that she had done it. It was a triumph which in her heart she counted as more than the triumphs of London, of Paris, of New York, of all the world. For she had not yet escaped the Town. She would not be free until they saw her fabulous success.

But Hattie could not go with her. Hattie's triumph was spoiled. On the night of the concert when *The Everlasting* had appeared without warning, it was necessary for some one to see that the old man was returned safely to the apartment, so to Charles Tolliver the task had been assigned. Gramp, Heaven knows, could easily have found his way back; he knew more of the world than any of them, but he chose never to interfere with such plans lest he seem too active, too spry to require any attention. To guard his security, he encouraged their assumption that he was feeble and a bit childish. He had not forgotten the security which comes of being a possession.

It is impossible to have known what thoughts passed through the crafty, old mind as he walked by the side of his son through the dark streets. They did not speak; they were as strange to each other as they had always been, as remote as if there had been not the slightest bond between them. Perhaps the old man scorned his son for his gentle goodness, so misplaced in a world where there was so little use for that sort of thing. Perhaps he understood that Ellen was after all much closer to himself than to her father. Perhaps he knew that Charles Tolliver, in his heart, had been saddened by the triumph, because it stood as a seal upon his daughter's escape. Perhaps he noticed the faint weariness in the step of his son, the dark circles beneath his eyes, the listlessness of his manner, as if he had grown weary of the confused, tormented life all about him.

It was the old man . . . the father . . . whose step was light,

whose eye was shining as they entered the flat. It was the old man too who sat up reading until he heard Hattie and Miss Ogilvie, returning from the Ritz, come in at three in the morning. For Charles Tolliver had gone quickly away to his bed and to the dreams that were his reality.

In the morning Hattie had called Ellen to say that her father was ill. He had been drowsy. It was almost impossible to keep him awake. The doctor had been there.

"He says," Hattie told her, "that he must have been ill for a long time without speaking of it. He has never complained. I don't understand it. And now he's too drowsy to tell me anything. The doctor says he is badly run down. He is worried because Papa seems to have no resistance."

He had grown no better with the passing of time. Indeed, the drowsiness seemed to increase, and there were times when he talked irrationally, as if he had never left the Town at all. He held long, fantastic conversations with Judge Wilkins and talked too of the Grand Circuit races and Pop Geers.

And when Ellen left for the Midlands, Hattie remained behind to sit in the rocking chair at her husband's side caring for him and for Gramp who had since the night when he ran away to the concert become troublesome again as if there were something in the air.

53

IN the Town the new concert hall of which Cousin Eva Barr and May Biggs had written with such enthusiasm and detail raised its white Greek façade a score of yards from the main street. Erected to the twin worship of the muses of Music and the Theater it supplanted the dismal opera house of an early, less sophisticated period, and so left the late U. S. Grant architecture of that shabby, moth-eaten structure in an undivided dedication to the bastard sister of Music and the Theater. a shabby, common-

place child known as the Movies, whom Sabine had once said should be christened Pomegranate. Though the new temple was barely finished and the names of Shakespeare, Wagner (who would probably be left out now that there was a war and the Germans, who were the very backbone of the Town, had become blond beasts, professionally trained ravishers, and other things), Beethoven (who would slip by the committee because he had been dead so long), Verdi (whose *Aïda* many supposed to be the high water mark of all opera), Molière (suggested by Eva Barr but unknown to most of the committee), Racine (likewise), Weber (who was so dead as to be a natural history specimen and therefore unlikely to ravish any one, even spiritually), Goethe and Schiller (likewise, though still under suspicion)—were not yet carved upon its limestone pediment, the building was already streaked by the soot which drifted perpetually over the city from the remote flats where the mills now worked all day and all night in making shells. Yet the handsome temple could have had no existence save for the soot; the very smudges upon its virgin face were each one a symbol of the wealth which had made it possible. The Town had known four stages in its development. In the beginning there had been but a block house set down in a wilderness. Before many years had passed this was succeeded by a square filled with farmers and lowing cattle and heavy wagons laden with grain. Then in turn a community, raw and rankly prosperous which grew with a ruthless savagery, crushing everything beneath a passion for bigness and prosperity. And now, creeping in toward its heart, stealthily and, as many solid citizens believed, suspiciously, there came a softness which some called degeneration—a liking for beauty of sound, of sight, and of color. It stole up from the rear at the most unexpected moments upon men like Judge Weissmann. The wives of leading manufacturers and wholesale grocers had traitorously admitted lecturers and musicians into a fortress dedicated hitherto to the business of making money. And then with a sudden rush, the new forces had swept out of their hiding places on every side and saddled upon the noble citizenry a concert hall,

a temple erected in the very heart of the citadel to the enemy.

So it stood there, bright and new, a few hundred yards from the Elks Club—a symbol of a change that was coming slowly to pass, a sign that the women and the younger generation had grown a little weary of a world composed entirely of noise and soot and clouds of figures. Men like Judge Weissmann saw it as the beginning of the end. Judge Weissmann (himself an immigrant from Vienna) called it “a sign that the old thrifty spirit of the pioneer was passing. The old opera house was good enough for concerts and shows.” And secretly he calculated how much all that white limestone and carving had cost him in taxes.

It was into this divided world that Ellen, who had known only a community that was solid in its admiration for smoke and big-ness and prosperity, returned. They were good to her, despite all the things they had to say regarding her affectations. They considered her dog (Callendar’s dog) ridiculous, and they disapproved of the uncompromising Miss Schönberg who demanded her cash guaranty for the concert almost as soon as she stepped from the train. In certain benighted circles (which is to say those not associated with the flamboyant Country Club set) it was even whispered that she drank and smoked. They wondered how gentle Miss Ogilvie received such behavior, for Ellen stayed with Miss Ogilvie, who watched her bird’s-nest parlor grow blue with the smoke of Ellen’s and Rebecca’s cigarettes without ever turning a hair. Was she not entertaining a great artist? If she herself had had the courage, might not she have been smoking cigarettes and drinking champagne? Had she herself not failed because she was afraid of what people would say? None of them knew the spirit of rebellion, smoldering for so many years, that now leapt into flame beneath the mauve taffeta dress which she wore every day during Ellen’s visit.

The bird’s-nest parlor, with all its pampas grass and coral and curios, must have set fire to strange memories in the breast of Ellen. She sat again in the same chair where she had sat, abashed but proud, awkward yet possessed of her curious dignity, on the night

of the elopement. The little room was filled with memories of Clarence. She must have seen him again as he had been on that first night (so lost now in the turmoil of all that had gone between) . . . sitting there, frightened of old Harvey Seton, ardent and excited in his choked, inarticulate fashion, a man who even then had seemed a little ridiculous and pitiful.

And once Miss Ogilvie had summoned him to life when she said to Ellen, "Poor Mr. Murdock. If only he could be here to see your success."

The little old woman had the best intentions in the world. The meager speech was born of sympathy and kindness alone. She could not have known that each word had hurt Ellen intolerably. Poor Clarence! He would not have liked it. It would have made him even more insignificant and wretched. *The husband of Ellen Tolliver. That's what I'll be!* The words echoed ironically in her ears. And Clarence had never known Lilli Barr, who was born years after he died. . . . Lilli Barr who had nothing to do with poor Clarence. So far as the world was concerned he had never existed at all.

She had her triumph. There were set floral pieces with the words "Welcome Home" worked in carnations and pansies. And there was a welcoming speech by Mrs. McGovern, president of the Sorosis Club (who had downed Cousin Eva Barr only after a fierce struggle for the honor). And they had cheered her. It was a triumph and in a poor, inadequate fashion it satisfied her. But she was not sure that it was worth all the pain.

She did not go into the empty, echoing rooms of Shane's Castle. She saw it, distantly, veiled in the smoke and flame of the Flats, from Miss Ogilvie's back window on the hill, the one monument of her family in all the Town. She could not have borne it to enter alone the door which on each Christmas Day for so many years had admitted a whole procession.

And she came to understand that it was not alone the Town which she was driven relentlessly to escape. It was the Babylon Arms, Thérèse Callendar and all her world, even her own family,

all save Fergus—she must escape forever any tie that bound her, any bond which gave her into possession.

On the day after the concert Miss Ogilvie gave a reception. Crowds of women and a few intimidated men thronged the tiny parlor. They passed in and out in an endless stream, until Rebecca, who could bear it no longer, invaded the virgin privacy of Miss Ogilvie's bedroom and fell into a perfect orgy of smoking while she read *Holy Living and Dying*, the only book at hand to divert her. Hansi, shut in an adjoining room, howled and howled in his solitude.

Long after the winter twilight had descended, at a moment when Ellen thought she could endure the procession no longer, it began to abate and as the last guest departed she saw, coming up the neat brick walk between the lilacs and syringas, the figure of a plump dowdy woman surrounded by a phalanx of children. In truth there were but four in the phalanx but in the fading light their numbers seemed doubled. As the woman came nearer there rose about her an aura of familiarity . . . something in the way she walked, coquettish and ridiculous in a woman so plump and loose of figure. And then, all at once in a sudden flash, Ellen recognized the walk. The woman was May Biggs. Years ago May had moved thus, giggling and flirting her skirts from side to side while she walked with her arm about Ellen's waist. Only now (Ellen reflected) there was twice as much of her to wriggle and the effect was not the same.

As she approached Ellen did not wait. Some memory was stirred by the sight, something which she could no more control than she could understand. . . . May Biggs, whom she had scorned always, coming up Miss Ogilvie's brick walk carrying one child and leading three others by the hand, a May Biggs who was stout now and already middle-aged in her dowdy clothes covered with feathers and buttons and bits of passementerie. It was extraordinary, the feeling that overwhelmed her; it was a

sensation compounded of joy and melancholy, of guilt and a curious desire to recapture something which had escaped her forever, perhaps that first reckless youth which had slipped away in the night without her knowing it.

She stood in the doorway, crying, "May . . . May Seton!"

And then she was kissing May who blushed and held on awkwardly to the youngest of the four little Biggses.

In the little parlor they were alone, for Miss Ogilvie under the stress of the excitement and the failure of the local bakery to deliver the macaroons had retired to her chamber with her smelling salts, where she now sat in a cloud of blue smoke talking with Rebecca while the great black dog howled in the adjoining room.

Once they were seated, May put forward her offspring, one by one, in order on the descending scale. "This is Herman Junior . . . and this Marguerite . . . and this Merton . . . and the baby here is named after me."

(All in order, thought Ellen, two boys and two girls, properly alternated.)

The two boys shook hands awkwardly, Marguerite curtsied and smirked with all the coquetry descended from her now settled mother, and the baby gurgled pleasantly and buried her head. They were all very neat and clean. Their manners were excellent. They revealed glimpses of a little world that was placid, orderly, comfortable and perhaps a little monotonous.

"I brought the children," said May. "I wanted them to meet you. This," she said, addressing the three who were able to walk, "is my girl friend I told you about. She's famous now. You can remember when you're grown up that you've met her." And then abruptly, "Marguerite, put down that cake until the lady tells you to have one."

She had not changed much. Hers was the good-natured, pleasant sort of face on which time leaves few traces, and since nothing could ever happen to May, very little could happen to her face.

It had grown more plump, and less arch, for she was content and satisfied now with a solid husband, and she showed every sign of presenting a new hostage to fortune.

"Well," she said, shyly. "A lot has happened, hasn't it, Ellen. . . . I suppose I can still call you Ellen."

There was something in May's shyness, in the awe which shone in her eyes, that struck deep into Ellen's humility. It made her feel preposterous and absurd and a little nightmarish.

"Good Heavens!" she replied. "That's my name. Of all the people in the world, you have most right to use it." And then. "But tell me the news. I've been too busy to hear any of it. It's been ten years since I went away."

She found herself blushing, perhaps at the sudden slip of the tongue that betrayed her into recognition of the one unpleasantness that stood between them. It was almost as if she had said, "since I ran away with Clarence."

May, it seemed, was no more eager to mention his name. She hastened past it. "I tried to get Herman to come, but he wouldn't go where there were so many women. He wants to see you. He said to tell you that if you would come to lunch, he'd come home from the works. You'd never know him. He's a father now," she made a sweeping gesture to include the restless troop that surrounded her, "and he has a mustache."

Ellen declined, with a genuine regret. She wanted vaguely to enter the mild, ordered world out of which these four children had come.

"I can't come because I am leaving at eight. You see, I can't do what I like any more. I have engagements . . . concerts which I must keep. But thank him. Maybe he could run over to-night."

May thought not. They were making an inventory at the Junoform factory and Herman would be there until midnight. Harvey Seton (Lily's arch enemy) was dead.

"He died last June. We found him cold in the morning in his bed in the spare room. You see he hadn't slept in the same

room with Ma since Jimmy was born. She says if he had, he might be alive to-day."

So Herman was head of the factory now and he was worried. The new fashions had cut down the sale of corsets, and corsets made of rubber were putting into the discard those built upon the synthetic whalebone which old Samuel Barr had invented. Business wasn't so good. Perhaps the fashions would change. Perhaps they would put in a rubber corset department. Ellen was fresh from Paris. Did she think there was any chance of small waists coming in again?

"Of course," said May, with an echo of the old giggle, "women with my figure will always have to wear whalebone. Rubber is no good for me. And then just now, I have to wear my corsets loose. . . ." She sighed. "If only I had a figure like yours." And she swept Ellen's straight gray clad figure with an appraising and envious glance.

"And your grandfather is still alive?" asked May in astonishment. "Why, he was an old man when you left. He must be nearly ninety now."

"He's ninety-one and very spry," said Ellen. "He goes out to walk alone in the city. He hasn't changed at all."

"Well, well," echoed May, and there rose an awkward pause which neither of them seemed able to break. Now that they had gone quickly through the past there seemed to be nothing of which to speak. The sound of the black dog's howling came distantly into the little parlor. It was Merton, the third child, who saved the situation. May cried, "Merton, how many times have I told you not to touch things. Take your hand right out of that goldfish bowl. . . . Here, come here now and wipe it on Momma's handkerchief."

While this was being done Ellen reflected, a bit grimly, that perhaps it was just as well that she could not lunch with May. If the conversation had grown sterile in half an hour, how could one hope that it could be spread over an hour? Sabine, perhaps, had been right, when she had said once that it was a bad sign

when a person had a great many *old* friends. It meant that such a person had not much capacity for growth.

Here was May unchanged, exactly as she had always been, save that she had now the satisfaction of a husband and was no longer restless and coquettish. Perhaps she had been right when she said so long ago that all May wanted was a man; it did not matter what man.

"There now," May was saying. "Sit on the chair and don't swing your feet. You'll scratch Miss Ogilvie's furniture." She turned to Ellen. "Marguerite," she said, "is now taking lessons from Miss Ogilvie. Maybe some day you'll be famous too, Marguerite. Maybe you'll play for the lady. Come now . . . that's a nice girl . . . play your new piece, the one called The Jolly Farmer."

But Marguerite would not stir. She grew arch and hung her head. She threatened to sob. Her mother coaxed and argued and pleaded but nothing happened. Marguerite would have none of The Jolly Farmer. It was Rebecca who saved the situation by coming in.

"My God!" she said, on entering, but the rest of her sentence was lost forever because the sight of May and her offspring silenced her.

"Miss Schönberg," said Ellen, "this is Mrs. Biggs."

"Pleased to meet you," said May, staring at the exotic figure of Rebecca, and then after a strained silence, "I must go now. Baby wants her supper."

Ellen went with the party to the door and as she bade them farewell and the little procession got under way, she saw that May hung behind with a curious air of embarrassment until the three older children were half way down the neat brick path. With only the baby left to hear her, she turned abruptly to Ellen and with a blush, said, "There was one thing I wanted to ask you and I never had a chance until now. It's about Clarence." She hesitated and then with a supreme effort managed to say,

"There was a story that he shot himself. . . . That wasn't true, was it?"

Ellen did not answer at once. She took the hand of the baby in hers, and looking away, replied in a low voice, "No, it wasn't true. . . . You remember he had a weak heart. It was his heart that killed him."

"I'm glad," said May softly. "I always liked him. I wouldn't want to think he'd committed suicide."

She stood in the doorway, unconscious of the cold until the figure of May, swaying from side to side and surrounded by the phalanx of offspring, had disappeared among the shadows of the lilacs.

In the hallway, Rebecca was awaiting her.

"Thank God, that's over," she said with a laugh, but she must have noticed that Ellen did not respond.

"She was a friend of mine," Ellen observed gravely. "I grew up with her."

Again Rebecca laughed in that same hard, worldly fashion. "I must say she has been more abundant than you."

This time Ellen made no answer at all. She was hypnotized by the memory of the look that had come into May's eyes at the mention of Clarence. It was an embarrassed, shy look, but it glowed all the same with a fire that had never burned for Herman Biggs. And Ellen understood then for the first time that she had been wrong after all, for Clarence—poor, meek, inarticulate Clarence, who had been dead for years—was to May a romantic figure, a fascinating creature. May had thought of him always . . . perhaps in the same fashion in which she herself thought of Callendar.

It had been all wrong since the beginning. There was no longer any doubt. It was May whom he should have married. And she wondered again for the thousandth time what it was that had turned him toward herself.

But the dog was still howling in loneliness. She walked along

the tiny hall and as she opened the door he leapt at her in a frenzy of devotion.

"Hansi, old fellow," she murmured and pressed her face against his sleek black head.

54

IT was six years now, through the evil chance that led them to pass each other unknowingly in mid-Atlantic, since Fergus had seen his sister. From afar, even in the turmoil and excitement of the war he had watched her progress, now in the letters from his mother (which he discounted because he knew she was inclined to exaggerate when her children were concerned) now in the letters from Ellen, and sometimes in the newspapers which filtered through, weeks old, to his escadrille at the front. As Ellen had guessed, he understood the ascent perfectly; he saw her working at it doggedly with one eye always upon the lucky chance. From afar he had admired the whole campaign and developed a passionate curiosity to know this Rebecca Schönberg who stood so cleverly in the background of the whole affair. She too had genius.

The great distance which separated them—even the years which had passed since he saw her, aboard the greasy old *City of Paris*, slip away into the winter mists of the North River—had not altered the transcendent quality of their understanding. Their tie was not, like the love of Hattie, a thing which emotionally demanded a close and breathless contact. It was less a matter of the senses and more a matter of the mind. Each had known always what to expect from the other, above all else a frank and unabashed honesty. They were very like each other, save that Fergus (and he knew it ruefully) lacked his sister's stiff, inflexible wilfulness. It was these qualities, he understood well enough, which had given her the advantage. It had made of her a conqueror. The lack of it had left him a charming, happy-go-lucky fellow.

But it gave him too a savor in life, a wild enjoyment, which she could never know.

The war suited him. As his mother had believed, it was to him a great show, a sort of masquerade in which he was at once a participant and a spectator; and it gave rein to impulses and inheritances which otherwise might never have been awakened—such strains as a passion for adventure that had its origin in wild cattle-thieving highland ancestors, and a love for the excitement to be found in battle high in the air above a world that lay spread out beneath him mapwise and miserably dwarfed. A little of this he managed to pin down in the eager, hurried letters he wrote to Ellen, so that she understood what it was that made him content and happy. It was a satisfaction very like her own, the satisfaction of triumph over great odds, of gambling for high stakes, of finding oneself absorbed utterly and passionately in the thing at hand. It was that queer streak again—the same queer streak which had made of Sam Barr a pauper and of Old Julia Shane a woman fabulously rich, the streak to which the clumsy perpetual motion machine rusting in a corn field of the middle west stood as an eternal monument. It was the old fever to gobble up all of life, not alone mere stupid contentment, but danger and sorrow and even tragedy—a strange unworldly greed to get the most of a life which each of them knew in his very marrow was bitterly brief.

It was easy to see in the glowing letters of Fergus that he was wildly happy in those days. It was easy to see that the old restlessness, so long without a way to turn, at last had found its goal. The old adventurous blood had come into its own.

From a great distance he had watched his sister's triumphs but, unlike the others, he had no awe of her imperious way of riding roughshod over those who stood in her path. To him Ellen Tolliver would always exist, concealed perhaps inside the shell of Lilli Barr, but alive none the less and ready to be called forth. The core, the heart was eternal. It did not change. He saw her still, in the rare moments when he had peace enough for

reflection, as he had always seen her—a wilful, smolderingly brilliant, disagreeable sister with whom he could do as he chose, no matter what her mood or temper. It did not occur to him that she had grown older, in some ways more mellow and in some ways harder than she had ever been.

It was from Ellen that he heard first of his father's death. She wrote him that the gentle man had gone to sleep on the night after her first concert in America and that afterward he had never really awakened. There had been moments when for a time he had recognized his wife and talked to her, though he did not seem quite clear and mixed the past and the present in a strange and touching confusion. And at the end she had written, in her bold, sprawling hand, "None of the doctors appeared to know what it was that killed him. But I knew what it was. He died simply of homesickness. He hated the city. He was born to hate it. But you must never say this to Ma, for it was she who forced him to leave the Town. And it was our fault in the end . . . yours and mine, because it was us whom she was pursuing. She'll never stop. She's an extraordinary woman. Time has no effect upon her, no more than it has upon The Everlasting. He is ninety-four and though he looks as old as Methuselah, he is as spry and as clear in the head as a boy. He has learned how to protect himself. Oh! So admirably! Sometimes, I fancy he will outlive us all . . . sitting in his room, rocking and chuckling! He has discovered a secret which none of us know! And he'll never tell us."

Thus Charles Tolliver had died, peacefully and without resentment, indifferent to the triumphs of his children so long as they were lost to him; for long ago he had recognized the loss, a thing his wife would never do. And he had lost not only his children but the very life he had loved. He had gone now from a sleep that had been fitful, from dreams which had been awakened harshly each morning by the noises of a hostile city, into a long unbroken sleep. Quietly and gently he had lived, a friend to all the world, serving for his part as little more than the father of

Hattie's children, passing on to them the qualities of old Gramp to unite with the qualities of Hattie and produce such offspring as Ellen and Fergus. They had never belonged to him, even for a moment. They had been Hattie's always, and old Gramp's. . . .

55

NEARLY three years passed before Ellen, having meanwhile added Australia and South America to the list of her triumphs, returned to the Paris which she had not seen since the day she left with Rebecca for the Vienna they had never reached and now never would reach; because, as Rebecca said, the old Vienna was gone now, forever. Ellen would never know it as it had been in the days when Rebecca had visited Uncle Otto who owned a sapphire mine in Cambodia.

In the end she went back to Paris over the protests of her mother and against the advice of Rebecca, who saw the return simply as a great bundle of money thrown to the winds. But she could not have done otherwise. She had to return. She was unable to explain the instinct, but she trusted it shrewdly as wise persons trust instinct for its value as accumulated experience over any mere process of logic. She had to see Lily again and the beautiful house (so saddened and changed) in the Rue Raynouard. And there were times too when she became obsessed by an inexplicable fear that if she did not go at once, she might be too late. . . . Too late for what? This she could not answer, save that vaguely it must have to do with Fergus and Callendar. Lily was in no danger; she lived quietly in the Rue Raynouard or in the white villa at Nice.

For two years she had allowed herself to be ruled by circumstance and by Rebecca Schönberg, the high priestess of opportunity. She would wait no longer now. And so, after a terrible scene with Rebecca in which they both descended to the level of fish-

wives, she had embarked to return to a city which could mean nothing now so far as her success was concerned, a barren city that lay dark and blue with the coming of nightfall.

The old fear possessed her now for days at a time. Life was rushing past her on and on. . . . She might be too late.

56

IT was a wet night of the early spring when Fergus got down from the Metro at Passy bound for the house in the Rue Raynouard. He had been there before, many times, for Lily, pleased perhaps to have him in a house which seemed now so empty and desolate, had given him one of the rooms opening upon the long gallery to use as he saw fit. But the visits had not been too cheerful. He had found Lily alone in the house, mourning for old Madame Gigon and her nephew, the Baron. The old beauty of the place had not faded; even Lily had not changed greatly. She was still young, amazingly so, but she appeared saddened and more quiet than in the days when, bedazzled, he had sat by her side at the family dinners in Shane's Castle. There was left of Madame Gigon's pets only Criquette, the Aberdeen, old and fat and quizzical, who followed at the heels of Augustine, the maid, and sniffed continually at Madame Gigon's chair before the fire.

He had met there Lily's son Jean, his own cousin, whom he had never seen before—a tall, red haired boy, impatient and wild over the mutilation that kept him in Paris shut up in the offices of the Ministry of War. It was strange to see one's own cousin (and Jean resembled Fergus amazingly in many ways) a Frenchman, a foreigner who spoke English with an accent. He had met there at tea a Monsieur de Cyon who seemed devoted to Lily and who was connected in some way with the government—a distinguished, white haired man recently become a widower. It was all very queer and foreign, yet when one thought of it, not so different

from Shane's Castle which in the midst of the Mills had always had its own strange air of the old world. It was Lily, the sinner of the family, the one who had surrounded herself with luxury and mystery, who explained it all. Knowing her, you could understand how there could be a bond between that smoky city of the Midlands and this quiet, beautiful house in the Rue Raynouard. She belonged to both and yet in a way to neither . . . a woman of the sort which had existed since the beginning of time. Fergus knew women rather better than most men, for they were attracted easily to him, but he knew of none who approached Lily in the perfection of her rôle. He understood Lily now. . . . He was no longer a little boy sitting fascinated by her side in the gloomy dining room of Shane's Castle. He knew the world now. Experience had come his way.

He thought of all this for the hundredth time as he emerged from the Metro into the drifting mist that obscured the tall white houses of the Square Alboni. In one sense he had changed. He was a man now, though he appeared little older than on the day he bade Ellen farewell. His features were more firmly molded; he had grown more handsome. But he was young still; it was the sense of youth which always impressed people, a reckless, headlong youth, of the sort which has no value in a worldly sense but glorifies all who are sensible to its glow. And he walked with a slight swagger born not of any pomp but of an excess of animal spirits, of a great vitality.

As he stepped out into the darkness the figure of the old flower woman sitting beneath her umbrella in a mist of rain and mimosa blossoms took form in the shadows. In the faint blue light from the darkened street lamp he stooped and bought from her a great armful of golden, powdery blossoms. (The mimosa was in full blossom now in Nice, showering Lily's white villa with its scented dust.)

Touched and warmed by his youth, the old woman chuckled. "Pour votre marraine?" she asked. (She had sold him flowers before now.)

"No," he told her. "Not this time. They are for my sister."

It was Ellen whom he was to see in the Rue Raynouard, Ellen whom he had not seen in years . . . Ellen who was famous now, a great musician.

As he moved away, it struck him as luck that he had come by chance on the flower woman. For a musician, an artist, flowers were the thing . . . an enormous bunch of flowers. Ellen would appreciate the gesture. She would play up to it. She would, he fancied, even expect it.

In the blue darkness (it was an excellent night, he thought, for an air raid) he turned the corner past the Café des Tourelles and the blind, steel-shuttered magasin. The houses stood forbidding and black. The Rue Raynouard between the magasin and the tobacconist's shop gaped like the mouth of Avernus. It would be difficult to find the house, turning its deceptive, insignificant face to the street, so lost among its commonplace neighbors. From far away, on the slope that led down toward the Seine, the sound of footsteps, muffled by the damp, came to him across the cobblestones. But the solitary walker turned away and the sound died presently into silence.

A hundred paces from the square he halted before a house to search for the number. In the darkness it remained invisible; it was impossible to find it even by sense of touch. Puzzled, he stood for an instant looking up and down the street, and then through the thick stillness there rose the faint sound of music, distant and fragmentary. Listening, he found presently that the melody took form: the fragments joined into a pattern of sound. It was the *Appassionata*. Only the crescendos were swept toward him through the damp night air, only the moments when the music rose into a wild abandon. There could be no mistaking it . . . the music was Ellen's, more magnificent than it had ever been.

As he stood there in the thin mist upon the doorstep the sound, coming distantly from inside the house up the long paneled stairs, had upon him an amazing effect. It was a sensation bordering upon clairvoyance; he no longer stood on the dripping cobble-

stones before a solid door, his feet upon solid earth. It was as if he existed in space alone at a great height; rather as if he had died. There was in the feeling something of terror at the immensity which surrounded him, an emotion which he had known once or twice before when, flying at night, there had been for a time no earth below him, nothing solid in all creation—a time when, if he existed at all, it was as an atom lost in all time and space. It was, he felt dimly, like being dead . . . a reverent, humbled feeling.

And yet in a confused fashion all life had suddenly achieved an amazing clarity. He knew himself suddenly, honestly, for what he was—a man who had harmed none, who had achieved nothing, who had asked only to find pleasure in living. And the others—He saw them too with the same terrifying brilliance . . . Ellen, who for all her faults was so much more worthy, who had in her the elements of a great nobility; his mother, passionate and bursting with vitality, a little somber and tragic save that she would never recognize tragedy when it came her way; and Lily, who had lived by some plan which she had never revealed, choosing instead to hide it away among the other mysteries of her life; and Jean, whom he scarcely knew until this moment, Jean who was neither French nor American nor even an honest child. He saw Jean's life too and its queer, inarticulate tragedy. And Old Gramp, who stood outside them all, aloof and cold, uncaught by the web that bound them all together . . . Gramp hugging his secret passionately to him. But it was Ellen whom he saw more clearly than all the others, struggling, fighting with a strange unconquerable courage, using the weapons which she found at hand, weapons which were not always fair. Some day she would choose the honest ones and then . . .

Far away, somewhere in the blanket of darkness the music died away and presently he stood again before the door on the cobblestones, rubbing the sleeve of his blue greatcoat across his face with the gesture of one awaking from a profound sleep. The great bunch of mimosa lay at his feet. It was amazing. He had been

for a moment dead, quite outside this world. The street was still again with a blue, dripping silence. Under each lamp there was a pool of blue light that was not light at all, but only another kind of darkness.

He gathered up the damp flowers and knocked loudly. It was too dark to find the bell and he stood there for a long time before the door was opened by Augustine who it seemed had gone to bed in the belief that no one could be out on such a night. She stood in a sort of wrapper ornamented with a gay design of Cupids, holding up her black hair with one hand. He saw with an amazing clarity each tiny detail, even the veins in her big red feet half-muffled in gigantic purple slippers.

"Ah!" she said. "It's you, M'sieu Tolliver. . . . Madame Shane is not here. She is in Nice."

And again the sense of having returned from the dead swept over him. Augustine was as astonished as if she had opened the door upon a phantom. Yet there was nothing extraordinary in calling at ten o'clock in the evening, even on a night like this.

"It is my sister I've come to see . . . Miss Tolliver."

"She is here . . . in the salon. She told me I might go to bed. There is a gentleman with her."

Clearly it was impossible for Augustine, in her state of attire, to announce him. He took off his greatcoat while the Breton girl, her eyes shining in admiration for a young aviateur, stood by holding the mimosa. He was straight and tall in his blue uniform with the silver wings glittering on his breast. He had his effect upon Augustine . . . the blue eyes, the blond curling hair, the spoiled mouth.

"I'll go in myself," he said, taking the flowers from her once more. "It's all right, I know."

And he started down the long stairs where the candles glowed dimly against the satinwood paneling. Half way down, where the gallery led off on both sides, the sound of music reached him once more. This time it was different; there were no passionate crescendos of sound, no tides of melody that swept high. The

music was low and gentle and filled with pathos. And presently he heard a voice—Ellen's voice—begin to sing in a clear contralto of unsuspected beauty. He went slowly, step by step, his shoulders brushing the satinwood beneath the dull flare of the candles. Out of the depths of the warm old room the sound came to him with the same amazing clarity which seemed to affect all his senses. . . .

*Nous n'avons plus de maisons,
Les ennemis ont tout pris, tout pris, tout pris
Jusqu'à notre petit lit.
Ils ont brûlé l'école et notre maître aussi.
Ils ont brûlé l'église et Monsieur Jésus Christ
Et le vieux pauvre qui n'a pas pu s'en aller!*

She sang gently, with an infinite sadness . . . Ellen who had damned the war, Ellen who had striven to ignore it, Ellen who had turned her back and taken no part in all the vast parade. What could she have known of it? What of Christmas and "les petits enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons."

*Les ennemis ont tout pris, tout pris, tout pris. . . .
Noël! Écoutez-nous, nous n'avons plus de petits sabots.
Noël! Noël! . . . Surtout pas de joujoux.*

And yet, listening, Fergus understood that she did know. This new Ellen, the artist, knew it as she knew all things because she was, in spite of Rebecca Schönberg, in spite of shrewd lighting and bouquets sent by the management, in spite of all the clap-trap, an artist. Standing there in the shadows of the stair, he knew without having seen her that she was changed. Something had happened to her.

*Les ennemis ont tout pris, tout pris, tout pris . . .
Jusqu'à notre petit lit. . . .*

The simple frail refrain echoed through the great rooms. It was a child who sang it—a simple naïve child. He knew for an instant what a strange, idiotic, pitiful affair this war had been. He had not known until now.

Mais donnez la victoire aux enfants de France! . . .

Fergus moved down from the last step of the long stairs. The green music of Debussy died away, and as he entered the room he saw that Ellen was not alone. She sat at the piano in the far end near the bright fire where she had sat on that first day when she had entered from the same stairway to discover Madame Gigon, little Jean and the dogs. There was only Ciquette left now, lying fat and lonely before the fire, and Hansi, the great black wolf. Beside her, with his back towards the stairs, sat a man with dark hair in a uniform blue like the one Fergus himself wore; and while he stood, silent in his surprise, he saw the stranger lean forward and, taking Ellen in his arms, kiss her. He saw too that her arms were about the stranger, but it was not the embrace that astonished him; it was the sight of Ellen's strong, white hand, clenched as if in resistance, as if in pain. Yet she did not struggle. It was only the hand . . . clenched, white, as if all her will, all her resistance were centered in it.

It gave Fergus the strangest shock. He found himself turning abruptly away and hiding in the stairway with an air of having witnessed something obscene. It was all spoiled now, all the entrance he had planned, the hope of finding her alone, the mocking, teasing, grandiose speeches he had planned. The stranger had taken possession of her, placed himself there between them as a barrier. It was ridiculous. . . .

Feeling like a small boy who had been caught eavesdropping, he coughed and scuffled his feet and then made a second entrance. This time they turned and Ellen, rising to her feet, stared at him for a moment and then rushed toward him cry-

ing, "Fergus! Fergus! You should have told me you had leave!"

He knew at once that she guessed he had seen them. Her face was flushed with shame and hurt pride. He knew the fierce *pudeur* (there was no other word for it) that enveloped her. It was a part of her savage unwillingness to surrender, to reveal, anything of herself.

Her beauty astonished him. He had seen photographs of her, but in them he had seen nothing of the proud domination that gave her that look of swooping down on one. It occurred to him in a flash that old Julia Shane, Lily's mother, must have looked like this in her youth. Only she had worn crinolines and Ellen was all in black in a tight gown that made her look like (the old simile returned, the inevitable one) like a greyhound. She had changed enormously; the awkwardness had vanished. This was no girl who hurried toward him; it was a woman, superb, splendid, full of fire.

"Fergus!" she cried, and ignoring the mimosa she crushed the bright gold blossoms against his blue tunic so that the yellow pollen clung to it and dimmed the silver wings. She kissed him passionately and held him in her arms for a long time. She was excited. He had never seen her like this. The shyness, the restraint was gone, for the moment at least. He felt a quick satisfaction of vanity, almost as if he had been her husband instead of her brother. She was a creature to be proud of. No wonder this stranger . . .

The dark man had risen now and stood waiting quietly for them to join him by the fire. He was a handsome fellow of perhaps thirty-five, though he may have been older, thin perhaps from the hardships of war. And in the olive skin were set the strangest pair of gray eyes, which looked on now with an expression of mild amusement. They were eyes which fascinated you, which you were certain had the power of seeing things which other eyes had not.

"Richard," said Ellen, "this is my brother Fergus . . . Mr. Callendar."

Her voice trembled a little with excitement. It may have been that this was the moment for which she had returned. She had them together now, with her, in the very same room, the two men—indeed, the two persons—whom she cherished above all others in the world. She had not been, after all, too late.

It must have been clear to Fergus, even in the disappointment of the moment, that he had stumbled awkwardly into the midst of some queer situation. He understood now why she had sent Augustine off to bed. It explained too the excitement of her manner and the sudden falling away of the reserve which she had always held before her as a warrior his shield. She still blushed, and she lighted a cigarette with a comically obvious air of covering her confusion. It was amazing to find in this woman who was by nature so self-possessed, so cold, a sudden air of school girl coquetry. This was an Ellen whom her brother had never seen, whom perhaps no one had seen until now.

And the stranger? He still stood with his feet well apart, finishing the last of his Chartreuse, balancing himself lightly on his toes, quite calm and smiling a little in a fashion that would have been warm and friendly save for the expression in the gray eyes. In their obscure, blank depths, there lay something sinister . . . "catlike" was the word. They were eyes like those of a cat, proud, sensual, indifferent, aloof, and incapable of smiling.

They sat down and for a moment Fergus was tempted to blurt out sharply that he had spied upon them unwittingly, that he knew exactly the mood into which he had blundered so clumsily. It would perhaps have shattered the tension and cleared the air, reducing them to a common ground of meeting upon which they might laugh and talk like old friends. It did not occur to him that Callendar might be his sister's lover because, in spite even of her blushes and confusion, he knew that such a thing was impossible. Besides, their manner toward each other was not that

of lovers; it lacked the hidden intimacies which come of only one experience. They were a little formal, a little strange. The flame that leapt between them was not quite clear and white and unhindered; there were obstructions, misunderstandings. It was a complicated relationship, one could see at a glance, and a little ridiculous. Even Callendar, so clearly a man of the world, so clearly a man who was neither an innocent nor a yokel, was not at his ease.

"Mr. Callendar," said Ellen, "is an old friend of mine. Until the other day I had not seen him for years."

But for Fergus this could have been no explanation. It told nothing of all that passed in those missing years, nothing of the intriguing of old Thérèse, nothing of the slow passion, fed upon absence and memories that instead of dying had, as Thérèse knew, gained strength. It revealed nothing of all the forces, conscious or blundering and obscure, which had been at work weaving the slow web that was now near to its end. Fergus alone guessed how nearly it was finished. It came to him in a return of that sudden flight of clairvoyance which had seized him in the dark street outside the door. He understood with an unearthly certainty that this was the man whom fate (that nonsensical force) had marked for his sister. This was the man destined to know all the tempestuous sweep of her fierce energy, her vast capacity for devotion, all the forces that until now had lain buried and dormant. This perilous man . . . (It was strange that strong women were likely to be unhappy in love, to make so often a choice which all the world, even the stupidest fellow, could have told her was wrong.)

It was this current of thought which ran beneath the surface of all their polite conversation, made so scrupulously, with such labor in defiance of that strain which none—not even Callendar, who perhaps chose to make no such effort—could dissipate. For Ellen's moment had passed swiftly as such moments, awaited so long, are likely to pass. There had been a quick flare of delight in the possession of them both and then this confused disappointment and sense of ill-ease clouding everything.

The tension lessened a little when Fergus, seeking in his amiable way one subject after another to pierce the indifference of the stranger, stumbled upon Loos and Amiens which Callendar knew as thoroughly from the ground as Fergus knew them from the air. But this led to nothing because it was now Ellen who found herself thrust outside the pale and left to grow sulky while they talked of this sector and of that one, each discovering with a swift heightening of interest that they had taken part in the same drive.

"My battery," said Callendar, "lay just back of Hill 408, in the curve of the road beyond Jouy. . . ."

"It was at Jouy," interrupted Fergus, his good-natured face flushing with interest, "that we broke up a German escadrille . . . four of them shot down."

"Did you ever see Reymont?" asked Callendar. . . . "The general of our division? . . . A pompous ass!"

"He was at St. Pol while I was there. He reviewed the division when it came in from the east. . . . I saw him on a balcony. . . ."

And so on, talking of this spectacle which Ellen despised as much because she could have no part in it as for any other reason. She would, at that moment, have preferred the spectacle to all the success, all the triumph; but it was no good. She was, for all her strength, all her power, simply a woman, thrust outside the experience which had enkindled Callendar and her brother. They had slipped away from her into a world of which she knew nothing.

At last, turning in pique from their talk, she went out and herself fetched them whiskey and soda, and when she had interrupted them long enough to pour out a glass for each she turned to the piano and fell to playing softly, as if to draw them quietly back to her. It was a plan which proved successful, for presently their talk abated a little and finally ceased; the war was put to rout and it was Ellen once more who held the center of the stage. The two men leaned back in their chairs, scrupulously silent, listening while she played for them in a fashion she had not done in years. And

for a time she recaptured a little of the joy that had escaped so quickly.

She played the things she knew would please Fergus, the music which he had loved in the days of the house in Sycamore Street and the flat in the Babylon Arms, music she had played for him alone at the moments when Clarence was not there to disturb her with the silent, unrelieved pleading of his dim eyes. She played the simple old March from *The Ruins of Athens*, and one or two Chopin waltzes and the *Marche Funèbre*, which to Hattie would always be McKinley's Funeral March and which to Fergus invoked memories of Shane's Castle and Ellen in shirtwaist and skirt wearing at her belt a jingling thing they called a *chatelaine*. And she wooed them with such success that, hypnotized by the spell, they did not hear the first screams of the sirens rushing through distant streets nor the faint popping of the guns far away on the summit of Montmartre.

It was not until she paused, her hands resting thoughtfully on the ivory keys, that Callendar stirred himself and murmured in French, "The Boches are here. . . . Listen. The siren!"

And from the street nearby—perhaps from the Place Passy—the shriek of a fire engine penetrated the room, even through the heavy brocade curtains that muffled the windows. There was one more scream and then another and another, and then the faint, distant popping of guns, like a barrage of tiny fire-crackers. Fergus stood up and glanced at his wrist.

"I must go," he said. "I'm late already."

"Not now," protested Ellen, turning abruptly. "Not now in the midst of a raid. You can spend the night here. . . . There is plenty of room." She trembled a little, as if in terror of losing him so soon.

Fergus smiled. "I can't," he said. "You see, I have a rendez-vous . . . with a man from my escadrille. He is waiting for me now."

"He won't be expecting you . . . not now."

"I can't help it, Ellen. He'll be waiting. Great Heavens! I've been through a hundred raids. They've tried to blow us up every night. . . ."

She had taken his hand now and was pleading anxiously. "But this is different."

Fergus laughed. "It is different," he said. "There's not one chance in a million here. . . ."

Callendar merely smiled, as if to confirm the statement of Fergus that it was ridiculous to suppose there were any danger. He had, of course, no reason for wanting him to remain. It was Fergus who won in the end, merely by persistence—a strange thing, for usually it was the strong-minded Ellen who had her way. To-night he was firm and certain of his purpose. She thought perhaps that it was the war, the years that had passed since she last saw him, which had so hardened him and given strength to his will.

She went with him to the door and on the stairs, when they had turned out of the big room, she said, "You are not going back to the front to-morrow?"

"No. I shall come back here. I shall be in Paris for a week. Perhaps I'll spend a night or two with you here."

In their manner there was still an air of strangeness and formality, as if Callendar had in some way followed them out of the room and walked between them up the polished stairs. She helped him into his greatcoat and kissed him affectionately.

"To-morrow," she said, "it will be better. We can be alone." And then in a low voice she added, as if in explanation, "His permission is over to-morrow."

Extinguishing the candles, Fergus opened the door and looked out. The rain had ceased and far above them beyond the roofs of the houses on the opposite side of the street, the searchlights fingered a sky that, save for one or two clouds, was blue and luminous like the street lamps.

"Look," said Fergus, softly. "They've spotted one of them." And they both stood in the open door fascinated by the sight of a

Gotha turned to a silver dragon fly by a long finger of light. Far away in another part of the city there sounded a faint crash and then another and another. The sirens still screamed, now on one side of them, now on another.

"It is magnificent," said Ellen, breathlessly.

"You see, they're not dropping them anywhere near us. They are trying to hit the bridges and the government buildings. I'm only going around the corner . . . into the Avenue Kléber."

They were speaking in hushed voices, caught again in that mood of insignificance. One might have thought that in the blackness of the empty street there were figures listening. In the eyes of Fergus there was the light of fascination . . . a bird held captive by a glittering snake.

"I must go," murmured Fergus still watching the silver dragon fly. "I'm late already."

She stood in the doorway until the darkness had swallowed him up and then, turning, slowly closed the door and went thoughtfully down the stairs. The sound of guns, the scream of the sirens and the echo of the distant, reverberating crashes grew fainter and fainter as she descended.

In the long drawing-room, standing before the fire with his glass in his hand Callendar was awaiting her. As she came toward him, she said, "I am proud of my brother," with the air of making a challenge, as if she reproached him for his indifference.

"I have heard of him," he said, quietly. "He is well known in the Division Reymont."

To this she made no reply. She drew her chair nearer to the fire and sat staring for a time silently into the bright blaze. There was no sound save for the asthmatic breathing of Criquette, the grunts of comfort from Hansi, who had flung down his great black body by her side, and the distant echoes from somewhere in the direction of the Champ de Mars.

At length he murmured, "Perhaps we had better go into the cellar. The last one was nearer."

But she refused. "No. Why should I?" For she understood well enough that to Callendar it was a matter of complete indifference. She knew his whole philosophy could be expressed in a single sentence—"If one died, one died." The thing was to live while one was alive. "No," she repeated. "Why should I be afraid? You and Fergus aren't frightened."

"It's not the same," he said softly.

"There's no reason why it shouldn't be."

For a moment it may have seemed to her that she too was playing a part in the spectacle. She too might for once undertake a little of the danger they had known, the one with indifference, the other with a kind of fierce excitement.

"It is much easier," she murmured, "to be with you both than to be here alone, not knowing what may happen to you."

Under the heavy, sensuous lids Callendar's gray eyes revealed a sudden sparkle of admiration for the fierce and sullen defiance of her mood. He must have known that she would have walked carelessly through the street, as carelessly as Fergus had done, that she would in her present mood have gone into an attack with a serene indifference; because she was angry now, angry at the war for which she had such a contempt, at circumstance, at the whole muddled business of living. She was angry and defiant with an Olympian anger, careless of cost or consequence.

There was another crash, nearer this time in the direction of the Trocadéro, and again Callendar's eyelids flickered with slow admiration. She did not move. She still sat with one hand on Hansi's head looking into the fire.

"I am not thinking about myself," she observed suddenly with the air of answering a question which he had not spoken. "It is my brother."

"He must be safe by now at his rendezvous. The Avenue Kléber is not far."

She was thinking too, in a dazed fashion, of all that had happened in the hour before Fergus blundered in upon them. Cal-

lendar had told her that at last Sabine was divorcing him. He had not asked her to do it. She had told him that she could endure the situation no longer. For the part which Thérèse played in the affair, he could not answer. "I don't know," he had said, smiling. "Sabine will say nothing and my mother denies having spoken of the matter. But if she saw fit she would not hesitate to lie deliberately. Sometimes I think she is not clever, and then afterward I find she has been stupid only because it suited her, because her stupidity was dictated by a devilish shrewdness."

And then he had told her of all the tricks Thérèse had played to bring about his remarriage, of how she had written him glowing letters about Ellen. "All she wrote," he added, "was true, of course. You can hardly doubt that. Still, it was not the way to bring it about."

And Ellen too had laughed and told of her interview with Thérèse in the library of the house at Murray Hill on the night of her concert, and at last she had asked abruptly, "Am I to interpret all this as a proposal?"

"My mother knew that there was no one else whom I would think of marrying. There was no need to marry at all."

After this speech she had been silent for a time and when at last she looked up at him it was to ask, "And you want to marry me because it is the only way you can have me?"

"No."

Her mind wandered back to the hot afternoon in the Babylon Arms when he had so nearly swept away all her self-possession. He had been different then, more ardent, more overwhelming, and yet she knew that the danger then had not been so great as it was in this very moment when he sat beside her in the big room, quiet and thoughtful, watching her with a fierce concentration.

"But there was a time," she said slowly, "when you would have taken me in any way possible without marrying me."

He was sitting with his body bent forward, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped. The hands were tense so that the knuckles showed through the tanned, dark skin.

"No," he said softly. "That is not true. I would have married you then. I wanted to marry you, and I was younger then and not so wise. I fancied then that I could get anything I wanted in this world for the asking. And yet it was marriage that I had in mind. I have always had . . . everything. I will be honest. I have always had women if I wanted them badly enough . . . all save you. . . . And you are the only one I ever *wanted* to marry. I swear to God that what I am saying is true."

Watching him, she could not believe that he was lying. She saw the clenched hands. She saw that the mockery had gone out of him. She saw, with a queer tragic catch of memory, the little vein in his throat throbbing as she had seen the same vein throb in the throat of Clarence. It was all so different now. There was no headlong recklessness, no wild, sudden torrent of passion. He had not seized her now and tormented her with caresses that assailed all her resistance. They talked calmly in a fashion that might have been called calculating and cold-blooded save that underneath it there lay a current which ran more deep and more powerful than any emotion they had known on that sultry afternoon in the Babylon Arms. It was all changed now. They were older, and wiser, and in some ways more understanding. And the world about them had changed . . . the shabby little flat had given way to the old, beautiful, glowing room. This calm, grave Richard was far more dangerous than the young and ardent one had been. It was more perilous now, for she was assailed through all her senses, and time was rushing on and on, past her. . . .

She did not answer him, and presently in the same low voice he continued. "'You are a woman of the world now," he said, "so you are not likely to believe what you believed then. I do not make excuses for myself. I did not love Sabine. I have never loved her. It was an arranged, a proper marriage like thousands of others, but it turned out badly. . . . I could not make myself love. No one can do that." He paused for a moment. "And she could not save herself. . . ."

This last speech he made with such a sad humility that there

was no air of conceit in it. Besides Ellen knew its truth; she had seen Sabine with her own eyes, weeping, suffering in a fashion she had once believed impossible, and pretending all the while that such suffering had been caused by a sick kitten. Yet it was this which somehow frightened her; she was afraid lest one day she herself might be humbled in the same fashion.

"My mother," he was saying, "is as you know, a Greek, and there is a great deal of the Greek in me. Sometimes I fancy I am Oriental . . . utterly, completely. An eastern man admires a woman of beauty and of spirit. He wants such a woman for the mother of his children." He unclasped his hands and took her hand in his. "But don't fancy that I love you in that way only. Sabine was a fine match in a worldly sense. She was rich. She was fashionable. But I too am that, so what could it mean to me? It was more than that which I wanted. I still want it. I want you to marry me as soon as it is possible."

She did not free her hand, though the touch made her faint as it had done so many years before. She was conscious suddenly that the old sense of conflict was gone, the old feeling of a hidden antagonism between them. Could it be that it was because he was humble now, asking something of her rather than coming boldly to her to claim it?

"And still," she heard herself saying, "I am not certain that it would work out. I don't know. . . . You must give me time."

Then he had kissed her hand and murmured, "We have not so much time as we once had. . . . Perhaps I have even less than I know now."

To this she had chosen to make no answer. Instead, she had played for him until Fergus blundered in upon them.

It was in the midst of these thoughts that she heard Callendar say, as he stood balancing himself before the fire, "We could go to the south to-morrow, if you like. I could arrange to have my permission extended. De Cyon could do it for me. We could have a week together there."

He must have known that it was too late now to ask such a thing. An hour earlier, before Fergus had intruded upon them, he might have succeeded. But everything was changed now. For an instant, during the time Fergus had been there, she had caught a glimpse of the old, familiar Richard, the mocking one; and the sense of conflict had risen once more sharply between them.

"How could I do that?" she asked, and after a moment's silence, "I can't do that sort of thing. It is impossible for me. . . ."

He smiled. "But the world believes it of you already. The world will not care. The world expects it of you. It can make no difference . . . and when the divorce is finished we will be married."

Her answer was colored with a sudden bitterness. "You would not have said such a thing to me once."

It was true. There was a difference now, of a kind she had not thought of before. It was a difference which had to do with age and all the slow hardening which had come with each year that stood between them and the hot afternoon in the Babylon Arms. Something had gone from them both . . . the warmth, the gallantry, the glow that had made him then so reckless, so willing to marry her, a poor nobody, in the face of all his world. It was gone from her too. . . . She knew exactly what it was now. It was the thing which she had felt slip from her as a cloak on the night she sat talking with Thérèse in the dark library on Murray Hill. They were no longer young. They weighed chances now, cynically looking upon their problem without regard for honor. The tragedy was that they could never go back. What was gone was gone forever. And in the memory of the fierce, youthful passion, so fresh and turbulent, this new love seemed to her an obscene and middle-aged emotion.

"No," she repeated. "I can't do that. It is to myself that it matters. . . . What the world thinks does not interest me."

Long after midnight Callendar at last stirred himself and bade her good night. They had talked, long and passionately,

over the same ground again and again, seeing it now in this light, now in that, arriving in the end nowhere at all; and through it all, Ellen must have caught once more the awful sense of his patience. He could wait; in the end he would have what he desired. And this she knew with an understanding that lay deeper than the mere surface of her consciousness.

Only it was all different now, even the significance of his patience, because time was rushing on and on past her. She was no longer a young girl; she was, as he had said, a woman of the world and therefore, perhaps, all the more desirable in her unchallenged, unbroken spirit.

"It is very late," said Callendar gently, as the black dog stirred himself and, yawning, rubbed his head against Ellen's hand. "And to-morrow . . ."

But she did not permit him to say, "And to-morrow I shall be back at the front." She was afraid of his saying it, because all the evening she had been fighting just this thought. She understood that it was his strongest weapon, the one thing which might demolish the wall of her resistance. It was not a fair weapon, but he would not hesitate to use it where his own desire was concerned.

"It's not late," she said, "not late for me. . . ." Yet she wanted him to go because she was afraid. She wanted to be alone, to feel her old strength return to her.

The dog followed them as they moved through the big room and up the stairs. The last of the sounds had died away—the terrifying screech of the sirens, the faint popping of the guns and the ominous shattering crash of the falling bombs. The house and the city beyond it lay in silence now, dark once more save for the showers of blue light from the street lamps.

At the top of the stairs, which lay too in darkness, he put on his greatcoat in silence, took up his cap and then faced her. He said nothing; he simply looked at her, and after a moment she murmured in a voice that was scarcely audible, "No, I cannot do it. The things which stand in the way are much stronger than

we are." And bending her head, as if she had in some way been accused, she added, "I will write you."

He did not speak. Instead he simply placed his arms about her and in silence kissed her. In the same fashion, her white hand grew tense once more, just as it had done when Fergus came upon her unaware, to understand all that was happening.

As he stepped into the street, she lingered in the doorway until, in the direction of the Café des Tourelles, the darkness swallowed him. She was alone again, and when she had closed the door she did not return to the drawing-room but sat down weakly on the top step of the long stairs and presently, overcome by the terrible sense of loneliness, she began to weep in silence. She was (she thought scornfully) in spite of everything, only a poor, weak, feminine creature.

Hansi flung his heavy body against her and, whimpering a little, put his black head affectionately on her knee.

She was sitting thus when the dog leapt to his feet and barked savagely at the sound of a sharp, sudden knock upon the door. It was the knock of some one in haste. The sound, shattering the dead stillness, grew terrifying, as if the one who knocked desired in some way to communicate his terror to those inside the house.

Ellen sprang up. "Je viens! Je viens!" she cried, and to the dog, "Tais toi! Hansi." She cried "Je viens!" as if by arresting the efforts of the knocker she might also destroy the foreboding in her heart.

Opening the door, she discerned dimly in the darkness the figure of a fat, bent little old man with white mustaches that caught the faint light emerging from the staircase. "Yes," she said, in French. "What is it you want?"

A voice which trembled a little with fright and carried the ring of an accent from the Midi answered her. "You are Mees Tolliver. I come from your brother. I am sent by him to fetch you."

For a moment she stood without speaking to the queer, bent figure, regarding him with the air of utter incredulity. He could

not be quite real . . . this gnome with the enormous white mustaches. And unaccountably there flashed through her mind a fragment of the letter Lily had written her long ago—*And then he rode away into the darkness. I am certain that he is dead.*

"He is hurt," said Ellen. "Something has happened to him!"

The old man answered simply. "Yes. There was an accident. He is wounded."

Without questioning him further, she wrapped herself in a fur coat and holding to the collar of Hansi she went out, after locking the door on the silent house, to follow the old man.

As they walked there were times when the darkness was so profound that she could not see him at all and was forced to call out for guidance. It was Hansi who aided her. He kept close to the heels of the old man.

She had a sense of passing through the Place Passy into the Rue Franklin.

"Who are you, mon vieux?" she asked.

The old man coughed. He went rapidly for one so old, but she fancied it was terror that gave speed to his fat legs, terror that the Gothas might return.

"I am the concierge of the building where Madame Nozières has an apartment. It was she who sent me. It is close at hand . . . in the Avenue Kléber."

Vaguely in the darkness, black against the deep blue of the sky, the ugly towers of the Trocadéro appeared a little on the right. "What is it that happened? Is he wounded . . . gravely, seriously, . . . my brother?"

The old man grunted. "I don't know. I know nothing. There was a bomb fell in the Avenue Kléber." He raised his head and sniffed like a shaggy old dog. "Smell," he commanded. "You can smell the bomb."

It was true. The faint odor of picric acid filled the damp night air. As they walked the odor grew more and more intense. In the darkness Ellen's guide pointed to the left.

"The bomb fell over there," he observed, "full in the street."

"Who is this Madame Nozières?" asked Ellen.

"I don't know," her companion repeated. "I know nothing. She has an apartment. She comes there sometimes. She is rich. She is generous. She does not live there always. She only comes now and then . . . when Monsieur has permission from the front."

"Monsieur Nozières?"

In the darkness, the old man was silent for a time. He was breathless from the effort of their haste. "No," he replied. "Monsieur . . . your brother."

This then was the rendezvous for which Fergus had left the house in the Rue Raynouard. There was some one then—some woman—who had the power of taking him from her on the very night he had returned after so many years. It must have been strong, this force, stronger than the power which Callendar himself exerted. She understood his persistence. Against such a power, she was, of course, helpless.

"It is here," said her guide abruptly. "Follow me."

He led the way through a corridor into an open court filled with summer furniture, stacked now in the corners against the empty stone urns. In the dim light that filtered through the shutters on the far side, she was able to discern the outlines of chairs and tables, piled helter-skelter, as if they too had felt the force of a bomb that hurled them into a corner.

The old man knocked on a door that led into the apartment from which the light showed itself. From inside the murmur of voices came to them, distantly. And at last the door opened.

Against the dim light, Ellen was able to discern the figure of a small woman, dressed in a trim dark suit. She wore no hat and her blonde hair, cut short, stood about her head in a halo of ringlets which caught and reflected the glow behind her. She had been weeping. Even in the emotion of the moment, Ellen saw with a feminine instinct that she had chic, and when she spoke she

divined also that "Madame Nozières" was not a cocotte but a lady. She had been weeping and something of the grief carried over into her voice.

"You are Mees Tolliver," she said. "I am Madame Nozières. I have heard you play . . . many times, but I did not know until to-night that you were his sister. You do not know me, of course."

There was a quality almost comic in the formality with which the stranger went about the business of introductions. In the hallway, she continued in a low voice, "I have known your brother for a long time. We are very good friends." And then she began to weep again. As Lily had done in the letter written after César's death, the woman made no pretenses, thinking perhaps as Lily had thought, that at such a time there was place only for the truth.

To Ellen the whole affair was shot through with the light of unreality. Standing in the dark hallway, with this strange woman weeping beside her—a woman who in some vague way had been brought close to her because she too loved Fergus—she leaned back against the wall for a moment trying frantically to bring her mind back to the truth. This could not be. . . . It was unreal, fantastic. . . .

The door opened and she saw, with a clarity that stamped the scene forever on her brain, a big room furnished with luxury, and in the midst of all the feminine softness—the pillows, the gilt chairs, the mirrors and the satin—Fergus lying very white and very still upon a bed of white and gilt with gilded swans on each of its four posts. At the side of the bed stood a tall, grave man with a black beard who wore the uniform of an army surgeon. He bowed to her and Madame Nozières murmured, "Doctor Chausson."

The name struck some chord of memory in Ellen's brain, but before she could trace it to its source, Fergus opened his eyes, and grinning a little, said in a low voice, "Well, this is a pretty

mess!" (This was the old Fergus. She knew it at once. All the strangeness had gone. . . .)

She asked no questions because from the look of the doctor and the tears of Madame Nozières she understood that there was only one answer. She wanted suddenly to weep, to beat her head against the wall, to cry out. But she was silent. She approached the bed and pressed his hand.

They had taken off the blue tunic with the silver wings and he lay now in his white shirt and the blue trousers with the silver braid along the seam. Around his waist he wore a woolen ceinture of brilliant yellow. The shirt was open and on his breast where the silver wings had been there was a little spot of red . . . a tiny spot, scarcely as large as a strawberry.

"I'm sorry," he murmured. "But you see I couldn't come to-morrow . . . as I promised."

She could find nothing to say. She could only press his hand more and more tightly.

"I'm glad you brought the dog," he continued. "It will be less lonely for you." And then he beckoned to the doctor and asked him and Madame Nozières to leave the room for a moment. When they had gone, he drew Ellen nearer to him and said, "You must not be hard with her. She is a lady. Madame Nozières is not her name. It is I who am to blame if any one. I wanted to marry her. . . . I'm not talking rot. We had planned it." And then for a time he was silent as if too weak to go on.

Pressing his hand more tightly, she whispered, "How could I be hard? Nothing matters . . . only one thing."

He coughed and continued. "She has done everything. She has risked the rest of her life to save me. Chausson is the great Chausson . . . the surgeon from Neuilly. She knows him and he knows her husband. They are old friends. That was why he came. He is a busy man and a great surgeon. You see, she risked everything . . . her reputation, her future . . . everything. She did not hesitate to send for him."

She knew now why the name had been familiar. She had heard

it everywhere in the journals, from her friends in Paris. If the great Chausson believed there was no hope . . .

"She is a good woman . . . a charming woman, Ellen. Madame Nozières is not her name. If she chooses to tell you who she is, be good to her, because I loved her."

"I will do what you wish."

He grinned again suddenly. "Think of it . . . to get it now, after three years . . . to get it now on the asphalt a block from the Trocadéro!" And then his face grew bitter. "It's a joke . . . that is!" And then, dimly, sleepily, he murmured, "We must hurry . . . we must hurry."

Ellen, still silent, found that she was praying idiotically for a thing which could never be. She knew now, sharply and cruelly, what the war, that grand parade, had been. Fergus who had loved life so passionately, who found pleasure and excitement everywhere! Fergus whom they had all loved so that they had spoiled him! Fergus lying there with his blond, curly head against the white pillows under the flying gilt swans! Those voluptuous, sensual swans! Eagles they should have been!

She could do nothing but wait. The minutes rushed past her, furiously. (We must hurry, he had said.) On the gilt dressing table one of the candles had begun to gutter and fade.

"Call them back," he said faintly. And she rose and opened the door. Outside Doctor Chausson had taken both Madame Nozières' small, exquisite hands and was talking to her, in a soft low voice, warm with a sort of understanding that moved Ellen queerly. They were so absorbed that they did not even notice her as she opened the door.

"Madame Nozières," she said softly, and the woman turned toward her. She was beautiful, more beautiful than Ellen had supposed, even with the tears swimming in her blue eyes. She was small and beautiful and exquisite like a bit of Dresden china. She understood the whole thing clearly; she understood perhaps even the profundity of the love which Madame Nozières had for Fergus.

Doctor Chausson refused to come in with them. "I will stay here. . . . There is nothing I can do." And so they left him, pale and hollow-eyed from work and want of sleep, to wait in the dark hallway.

Inside the room the one candle had gone out and the only light came from the single flame before the tall mirror. Fergus had closed his eyes once more, and the lids showed against the dead whiteness of the skin in a faint shade of purple. The two women sat one on each side of the gilded bed, watching in silence. Presently he opened his eyes and looking at Ellen said in English:

"This man. . . ." He had grown weaker now and spoke with difficulty. "This man . . . Callendar. Are you going to marry him?"

"I don't know."

He smiled. "I saw you when I came in. . . . That's how I knew. I saw your hand." And after a pause. "It's funny . . . I knew this was coming . . . I knew it as I stood outside your door."

Then he closed his eyes once more and when he spoke again it was to say weakly, "You must tell Ma. . . . It will be hard. . . . And you must not. . . . You must not tell her the truth. . . . She could never face the truth. She has never faced it."

He reached out weakly and took the hand, on one side of Ellen and on the other of Madame Nozières. Raising himself, he grinned again and murmured in French this time, "My life. . . . It's running away . . . inside me. You can hear it. . . . I hear it . . . now." And then for a moment there was an echo of triumph, a sudden flash of Gramp whom Fergus himself had named The Everlasting. He grinned again and said, "It was a good life. . . . I missed nothing . . . nothing at all."

And again slowly. . . . "This man Callendar . . . this man . . ."

But he never finished the sentence. He sighed and slipped back into the pillows of the bed surmounted by the four gilded swans. Madame Nozières began to weep wildly and flung herself upon

him, kissing him again and again. For Ellen there was no such relief. She sat now, stark upright and tragic, bound by all the years in which she had shown a proud and scornful face to the world. No, there was no such relief for her. She knew it. She could only sit there, quietly cold and white, and all the time she wanted to scream, to cry out, to beat her head against the stone floor of the corridor where Doctor Chausson stood waiting gravely. She could only sit and watch while Madame Nozières wept out her heart.

It was the sound of weeping, wild and passionate, that summoned Doctor Chausson. The two women had forgotten him, but the good man knew well enough what the sound signified. Softly he opened the door and came into the frivolous room. There beside the gilded bed he saw the sister, a strange, silent, handsome woman, dressed in black with her fur coat slipped to the floor at her feet, a woman (he thought) *bien Anglaise*, who could not weep. He knew that she suffered more than the other, more than Colette who had flung herself on the boy to weep hysterically. Colette, the charming, the fastidious, the beautiful, flung down in utter disarray, her eyes red and swollen with weeping, her golden hair all disheveled. . . . Colette whom he had seen but two nights before flushed and radiant at the *Princesse de Guermantes*'. He understood now why she had been so beautiful and so happy. But the boy could not see her now, and so nothing mattered.

He stood for a moment in silence, as if in respect for the grief of the two women. All this he had seen before, many times, . . . a young man, a boy, who had loved life as this one had loved it, who could jest, as this one had jested, with his very last breath. A boy whom women loved as these two women, the one so wildly, the other so profoundly, with such an intense, secret flame. It was cruel . . . hideous. . . .

He moved forward and touched Madame Nozières on her slim shoulder. And all the while he was conscious that the eyes of

the other woman were watching him, stony and cold and tragic.

"Colette," he said softly. "Colette. . . . You must not. . . . You must be quiet." With a gentle strength he lifted her from the bed. "Colette, it is nearly dawn. . . . You must be discreet. There will be questions asked."

But she paid no heed. She was sobbing now, bitterly and without shame. "You must be discreet," he repeated.

"What difference does that make now? . . . It is nothing . . . less than nothing. . . ." And she fell to weeping once more.

He mixed for her a powder and forced her to drink it, saying, "There is the necessary business. You must not be seen here . . . like this."

But she would not go. It was Ellen who at last stirred herself and succeeded in quieting Madame Nozières. "I will take him to my house," she said, quietly. "You may come there. . . . You may stay there if you like. It is a big house . . . in the Rue Raynouard. . . . No one will ever know."

She drew Doctor Chausson aside and gave him the address. "I will take care of things," she said. "I will stay here if you will arrange for the rest. I would like to stay . . . alone. It was good of you. . . . There is nothing I can say."

So at last, in care of the great Doctor Chausson, Madame Nozières, pale and with swollen eyes and disheveled hair, was led away, across the stone courtyard, gray now with the faint rising light of dawn, into the big gray motor that had followed him from Neuilly to the Avenue Kléber. Ellen watched them as they crossed the yard between the empty stone urns and summer chairs piled high in the corners.

When they had gone, she returned to the room and, locking the door, sat down to wait. Slowly, in the gray solitude, the relief of tears came to her. She wept silently. She understood now her fear of returning too late, that vague, nameless fear for which there had been no explanation until now. She had come so near to being late . . . only a matter of a few hours, of

a single night. For he had escaped them all now, forever. They would never possess him again. . . .

She looked at him, lying here white and still in the gay blue trousers with the silver braid and the yellow sash, and she understood why it was that he had seemed so young. It was because he had never really belonged to any of them. He had not even had a country of his own. He had gone out into a war which was none of his concern. There was nothing which tied him down, not even the nonsense which people talked of "la gloire" and "la patrie." For she, in her aloofness, had known it for the nonsense it was, just as he in his good-nature and love for all the world had known it. She remembered what he had once written her. . . . *"A man of our generation who has missed the war will not have lived at all . . . He will be a poor thing compared to the others. It is a game in which one must take a chance. It is better to die than to have missed it."*

He had believed that to the very end. Perhaps this was the secret of Old Gramp who had roamed the world and lived in this very Paris under the Second Empire. He had lived. He had done everything, and now in his old age he had a stock of memories that would last forever, a life which none of the others ever knew. He had been certain of only one life and he had made the most of it, so that he was ready when his time came to die with satisfaction, to take his chance on what lay beyond.

And as she sat there with the black dog by her side, in the slow, gray light, it occurred to her that perhaps the end of Fergus had not been after all so tragic. He had died in the very midst of life with the woman he loved at his side. If he had lived. . . . Who could tell? There was small place in the world for men like him. He never had the strength, the fierce aloofness of Old Gramp, the savage contempt of the old man for the drones and grubbers of life.

It was all a strange business, surely. Strange and confused and without sense. In the beginning, when she had first come into this frivolous room (so cold and dead now in the gray light) she

had been angry and jealous at his deception, and bitter at Madame Nozières for having caused his death. She had thought, "If he had not been going to meet her, he would not have been killed."

But she knew better now. She had been a fool. It was absurd and monstrous that any one, even herself, should fancy he could bend fate to his own ends. It was too imbecile, too senseless. No, she was wiser now. She was not the headlong fool she had once been. In the face of all that had happened in this one terrible night, she was utterly humbled. Who was she to question the behavior of this brother who lay dead under the gilded swans? Who was she, a cold, hard woman, to question a love of which she knew nothing? And what did it matter now? She was glad suddenly, with a strange, wild happiness, that he had known this Madame Nozières. Her bloneness, her beauty, her fine clothes, her spirit . . . all these things had made him happy, on how many leaves in Paris?

What did it matter now? One lived but an instant, frantically, and time rushed on and on. . . .

But he was right. Their mother must never know the truth.

She thought too of Callendar, for he was with her all the time, almost as if he had never gone away. The old foreboding returned to her—that phrase out of Lily's letter—*And then he rode away into the darkness. I am certain he is dead.* He had gone away and she did not know where. Perhaps she had been wrong to refuse him, cruel to have denied him the happiness that Madame Nozières had given to Fergus. Things mattered so little now. It seemed to her that she stood somewhere on a lofty pinnacle, looking down on the spectacle . . . a pitiful spectacle, so full of "sound and fury, signifying nothing." The old quotation came back to her out of the dim memories of the past when she had hated Shakespeare with an intense passion. "Sound and fury, signifying nothing." That was it. It was far better to be like her mother, the invincible Hattie, who never mounted to the

heights but kept her eyes always on the ground, frantically occupied with a thousand tiny things, never willing, as Fergus had said, to face the truth. And now that he was gone, her favorite of them all, what would she do? There remained nothing now except the one truth which none could in the end escape.

It was daylight and the ghastly smell of picric acid had died away before she stirred herself. The morning sun, pouring in at the window, seemed to say, "This is another day. We must all go on. This is not the end of everything."

(The sun, she thought bitterly, which Fergus had always loved even as a baby.)

So she had stirred herself wearily and gone over to the little escritoire which stood in one corner of the room. There, with the pen of gold and mother-of-pearl that belonged to Madame Nozières, she seated herself and wrote, one letter to Callendar and one to her mother. To Callendar she wrote that she would marry him as soon as it was possible. To her mother she wrote a lie. She wrote that Fergus had died in the house in the Rue Raynouard, alone with herself and Doctor Chausson who was a great doctor and came only because he was a friend of hers. Everything had been done which could be done. He would be buried not in a grave at the front nor in a lonely Paris graveyard but at Trilport, in the friendly cemetery where Madame Gigon lay, a little way off from Germigny l'Evec where Lily went in the summer.

And in the end she added another lie, because she knew it was the one thing above all else that Hattie Tolliver would want to hear. She even framed the sentence shrewdly, sentimentally, though it was false to her very nature. She wrote, "He died thinking of you. Your name was the last word he said."

For Hattie had at last to face the truth, and one must make it as easy as possible for her.

Almost the last word he had said was, "Callendar. . . . This man . . . Callendar." . . . And she would never know now what it was that he had meant to say.

There was a knock at the door. She knew what it was . . . the men sent by Doctor Chausson.

Ignoring it, she knelt beside the bed and pressed her cheek close to the cold face of her brother. She was alone now, more alone than she had ever been in all her life, where none could see her. Then as she stood, looking down at him, it occurred to her that this death had been in a strange way a perfect thing. . . . He had escaped in the midst of life, happier than he had ever been before. . . . There were worse things than death. It was only to those who remained that death was cruel. . . . It was cruel to understand, in that frivolous room with the bright spring sun streaming in at the window, that she had come to know him only when he was dead. There had never been time before. . . . There had been only the business of fame and glory and success.

When at last she opened the door, the men sent by Doctor Chausson saw a handsome woman hard and cold, without sympathy, who stood holding by his collar a great black dog who growled at them savagely.

In the days that followed Madame Nozières came twice to the Rue Raynouard, once on foot and once in a taxicab though it was quite clear that she was far more used to a motor of her own—a small, very expensive motor like that of Sabine. She it was who had candles placed in the room with Fergus and had masses said for him. And to all this, which old Jacob Barr would have called “popery” and denounced as rubbish, Ellen offered no resistance; for, not being sure any longer that she herself believed in anything, she saw no harm so long as it gave comfort to others. Fergus himself, she knew, would have smiled and allowed it.

Madame Nozières wept and thanked Ellen and made her ill at ease and miserable, but she did not say who she was or whence she came. Indeed, Ellen learned no more of her identity than she had discovered from Fergus himself, as he lay dying. She was a

lady, a *femme du monde*, a creature of charm and (despite her grief) of gaiety. She came out of mystery and returned to it. "Madame Nozières" was a label, perhaps as good as any other. Twice, long afterward, Ellen fancied that she saw her,—once walking in the Bois and talking earnestly with Doctor Chausson and once in the establishment of Reboux, but she could not be certain because each time she turned quickly away lest Madame Nozières should recognize her. She respected the mystery; she was afraid to intrude upon it. In some way it seemed better to leave the tragedy with its proper ending—in that frivolous room by candlelight in the Avenue Kléber. It had been in its way a complete, a perfect thing. To follow it further could lead only into triviality and disillusionment. She had no desire to know too much of Madame Nozières.

But the sense of mystery fascinated her and, in the lonely days in the Rue Raynouard, it appeared to change and soften all her beliefs. She saw now that mystery had its place in the scheme of things, that it possessed a beauty of its own which lent fascination to all life. There were others, she knew, besides Callendar who were never to be understood completely, never to be pinned down and taken apart as this or that. In all her haste, she had fancied that life was thus and so, that people were easy to fathom and understand. She doubted now whether she would ever know any one—even Lily or Rebecca. There was always something which escaped knowledge, something which lay hidden deep beneath layer upon layer of caution, of shyness, of deceit, or mockery, of a thousand things . . . the something which in the end was one's own self, the same self she had guarded with savagery through so many years.

For all that people might say or think, she understood that this Fergus, the one who stood in the candlelit room in the Avenue Kléber, had been more beautiful than any other . . . as he lay there clasping with one hand his sister and with the other Madame Nozières!

IT is true that Ellen in life and even Fergus in death did not really know their own mother. They had said that she would not be able to face the truth; yet she had done it, bravely and with a dignity that none of them would have recognized; for they had not seen her on the day she forced Judge Weissman, her enemy, to aid her because her children were the ones at stake.

So the premonition which had troubled her for so long came now to be a reality. With Ellen in Paris, Robert joined up with his own army, and Fergus (her beloved Fergus) dead, there remained only Gramp, cold and aloof and ageless, in his chamber surrounded by books.

It was the grim old man who found her lying in the darkness of the tiny living room of the flat with Ellen's letter crushed in her hand. In his unearthly fashion he had divined the tragedy. He saw that she did not weep; she did not even moan. She lay quite still, unconscious that he stood there in the shadows watching her. It is impossible to imagine what his thoughts could have been. For a time at least the hardness which had protected him for so long must have melted a little; for Fergus had been of all the family his favorite. It was Fergus to whom he lent his precious books. It was Fergus who had seemed at times the very incarnation of his own youth—so remote now, so buried beneath all his intolerant scorn of those who were afraid to live.

For a long time he stood there watching his daughter-in-law, silently and with an intense concentration as if he were obsessed by a desire to study her sorrow with the passion of an anatomist. And then he had gone up to her and quietly taken the damp, crumpled letter with a strange gentleness out of the strong, worn hand. She did not resist; she did not even stir. She lay quite still while he held the letter close to the light and peering at it read it through, though he knew all the time what was in it.

When he had finished he laid it again by her side and said in a

low voice, "The boy loved life, Hattie. And for those who die, death is not hard. There are worse things."

In thirty years it was the first time there had passed between the two any speech purified of anger or resentment.

To one of Hattie's nature there is consolation in the possession of the dead. The grim small tasks, the polite and empty phrases of condolence, the coming and going of those who care for the dead . . . all this empty hubbub and commerce serves in a fashion to conceal and break the anguish of loss. But for Hattie there were not even these things. She was left alone with Gramp in a flat which, though it had seemed empty before, now achieved a desolation beyond all belief. She (who had lived only in her children) had no friends about her; the very flat was not in the proper sense a home, such as the house in Sycamore Street had been. It was a barren, inhuman cave occupied before her by a procession of strangers which, when she left, would again close over the brief years of her tenancy. She found herself alone save for that ancient man her father-in-law, in a strange city, without even the body of her son for a bitter consolation.

So this woman, who had lived her life so richly . . . a life florid and overflowing with sentiment, a life that churned and raced along in an overwhelming current of vitality, achieved in the face of tragedy a calm and a dignity which she had never shown before. She understood, in the primitive depths of her nature, that this truth which she must face was the final one, from which there was no appeal. Always before there had been some hope ahead, some chance of turning events by a vast energy and a crude wilfulness to her own ends. There was nothing now . . . nothing save a few old clothes, some books and the Bible she had given him on his tenth birthday. To these she clung with the tenacity of a savage, and they were pitiful remnants to a woman whose love demanded the very bodies of her children.

For Hattie there were none of those shades of grief and joy which are the lot of those more completely civilized. She had no

capacity for seeing herself, or, like Ellen, for finding in the death of Fergus an illumination which served in a mysterious fashion to light up the long progression of her life. In her sorrow, Hattie no longer even pitied herself; and this, of course, may have been the secret of her dignity. Hattie, the martyr, who bore her cross and flung herself before her family like the Pope before the Visigoths, no longer existed. In her place there was a strong, almost grim woman, who was silent and did not complain.

Nor had she, like the more civilized, the pleasure of books and of philosophic reflection. Her life since the very beginning had been far too active for such things; and now, when at last there was time, when she had no one to care for save the independent old man, she could not read, she could not reflect. Books were poor pale things by comparison with the ferocious activity of life itself. There were no stockings to darn, no one for whom she might make meringues, no dog to place upon his mat before locking up the house. (To the apartment there was but one door and it locked of itself. It was, properly speaking, no real home at all.) So she came to invent things for herself to do. She lingered over her work and took (though she was rich now) to such pale tasks as embroidery and knitting, only to find that the objects of her labor, having been created for no real purpose, accumulated dismally in the drawers and cupboards.

She had letters both from Ellen and Robert which she kept in the family Bible to read over and over again; and sometimes a shameful, bitter thought crept into the recesses of her active mind. It was a terrible thought, which she thrust hastily aside as impious and touched with blasphemy; but it returned nevertheless again and again to torment her. She thought, "If only it had been Robert instead of Fergus!" (Robert who was so steadfast and reliable, who already was the youngest captain of his division). She was proud of him too, but in a different way. She could not say how.

The awful thought would not die. She would have given Robert to keep Fergus, though in the solitude of the empty flat

she sometimes cried out, "It is not true. I could not think such a horrible thing!"

The squabbling with Gramp came quietly to an end, though neither of them ever made any allusion to the change. They lived together for the most part in silence but the old man ceased to torment and worry her. And on her side without ever knowing why, she came to treat him in a new way, almost to cherish and protect him like some brittle piece of glass, as all that remained of the old life. She even made for him little delicacies and had him to eat at the table with her. At such times they sat, awkwardly, and without conversation, each perhaps abashed by the weakness that lay in this strange truce.

In the long empty days there came to Hattie a mysterious sense of having turned a corner, of having stepped from one room into another. The door between had, she knew, closed forever, though she did not understand why. She had come now into the borders of Gramp's country. She was growing old and so she came to understand a little the old man's vast indifference.

Before he sailed, Robert, dressed in his captain's uniform, neat and spotless, every button properly arranged, came to bid farewell. She could feel certain of him. There would be no mad exploits, no wild surges of temperament ending in disaster, no idle heroics undertaken for their own selfish thrill. These things Robert would never understand.

As he sat talking to her (trying bravely in his solid, unspectacular way to take the place of Fergus) he seemed square and massive and eternal as her father, old Jacob Barr, had been. There was reassurance in the snub nose, the solid jaw and the unruly red hair. Where Fergus had not even been able to look out for himself, she knew that this other son would care for his men with a detached and efficient thoroughness. There was nothing in the death of Fergus which could be counted as a material loss, even to herself. It was Robert who had earned money when it was most needed; it was Robert who looked out for

her and stood between her and the world. It was upon men like Robert that the whole world rested; he was a foundation, the beginning and end of all order and worth. And yet. . . . And yet. . . . Even while he sat there doing his clumsy best to make up for the loss of his brother, the old wicked thought kept tormenting her. . . . She wanted to tear it out by its roots, to destroy it forever; but there it was, always with her. . . . *If only it had been Robert.*

"You need not worry over me," he assured her. "I will take no chances. There's nothing romantic about war . . . at least not about this one. It's simply business. The side which is most efficient is bound to win. There won't be any nonsense. I'll look out for myself."

She said to him almost with indifference, "You're all I have left, because I don't see much of Ellen any more. She's too busy."

But she was not thinking of what she said: she was thinking that war *was* romantic. It must be so else it would not excite men as it excited Fergus. It was the romance that was the bait in the trap . . . romance and the excitement. So long as these things existed, there would be wars, for there would be men like Fergus who did not take their places efficiently but went because (she remembered one of the phrases he had used again and again in the face of her reproaches) "it was too big a show to be missed." It was not men like Robert who made war possible; it was men like Fergus. She saw it all with a vision uncluttered by talk of economics and politics; and so in her own fashion she came far nearer to the truth than this solid, logical son of hers.

But he was sure of himself, Robert. You could fancy him ordering his men about, ably and dispassionately, leading them admirably when it was necessary, as his grandfather Barr, the Citizen, had done before him in the Civil War. He would make a good job of it. You could see that he would quietly and thoroughly win distinction, not as Fergus had done, without once thinking of it, but because he had arranged it so. You could see

him being decorated with medals, as his brother had been decorated, again and again; but not for the same reason. He would not wear them as Fergus had done, with a swagger. He would cherish them, in neat leather cases, and bring them out to show his children and his grandchildren, because he could not tell them what the war was like, give them the feel of it, as Fergus could have done . . . Fergus who (if he had lived) would have lost the medals or thrown them away long ago in disgust like his Grandfather Tolliver, who found the Siege of Paris more romantic than Bull Run or Gettysburg. He had, one fancied, already counted his medals. One could see that he was cut out for a good officer.

"I will see Ellen as soon as I have leave," he murmured and thought, "And I will not be walking about the streets during an air raid as if I were at a church sociable."

Yet he was not bitter because Fergus was the better loved; that fact he had come long since to accept. He was scornful only because it seemed to him an idiotic thing to be wandering carelessly into the midst of danger. There could be no reason for it . . . none on earth.

Before he left, Hattie burdened him with a great bundle of sweaters and socks, all admirably made in the hours when she had been distracted by her terror of idleness.

"You must wear them all yourself," she said. "You'll need them in time. They'll wear out and you'll lose them. I'll send you others from time to time. It's all I have to do nowadays."

And on the way past the cell occupied by The Everlasting he must have heard the squeaking of his grandfather's chair as the old man rocked and rocked, lost again in a torrent of memories; but he did not stop.

"Say good-by for me to The Everlasting," he said and then, after kissing her abruptly, he turned and disappeared quickly down the stairs, so that she could not see his tears. For Robert

was, unlike the others, sentimental, though he had never once allowed his mother the joy of discovering it. It was a thing which he thought shameful.

Even he had caught a sense of her terrible desolation.

There is a rhythm in life, a certain beauty which operates by a variation of lights and shadows, happiness alternating with sorrow, content with discontent, distilling in this process of contrast a sense of satisfaction, of richness that can be captured and pinned down only by those who possess the gift of awareness. Old Gramp in his solitude knew well its workings, and Ellen, in Paris, had become, as the tempo of her own life began to lose its intensity, to understand it dimly. For Hattie, in the fretful ebb and flow of her existence there could never be such knowledge. This rhythm, this beauty, existed outside her, a thing apart, beyond the wall of her consciousness.

Gramp, in his solitude, knew too that there were in each life hills and valleys and, rising above them all, one peak which pierced the clouds. Out of the depths of his uncanny perception he came to understand that Hattie's life had passed its solitary peak. It had begun now to slip down the other side; what remained could be but a gradual falling away, a gentle decline until the end. What he knew from the summit of a monstrous detachment came to Hattie vaguely through her senses; she knew it as she knew the approach of damp weather by its effect upon her rheumatism. It was that sense of having passed from one room into another, with the door behind her closed and bolted forever.

And Ellen. . . . She too stood now on the summit, for ambition had been the beginning and end of her existence. She had accomplished; she had won. There would never be another peak so lofty, so enveloped in heady invigorating air; nor one so lonely. But there remained the things which lie always on the opposite slope of the peak—the things which the wise, like Gramp, place above all the hurry, the scramble, the headlong turmoil of the long ascent. There were the gentle pastures of reflection, of

kindliness, of warmth and fine thoughts, all the rewards which succeed the terrible struggle. Ellen, he knew, had crossed the summit; and she was still a young woman.

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ONE bright spring morning as Hattie sat looking out into the street while she sewed and thought, round and round, over and over again, those same thoughts which stole in upon her so frequently in these days of idleness, the postman brought a letter from Ellen. It was a brief letter, written it seemed in haste, but it contained two bits of news that changed the whole face of the world.

Ellen was to be married, and she wanted Hattie to come to Paris and make her home there.

"I have talked it over with Lily," she wrote, "and she is delighted with the plan. Her house here is enormous and comfortable, and Lily is rarely in it save in the spring and autumn. You could do as you chose with no one to annoy you. And you need never think or worry about housekeeping. I am sending a cheque, and Rebecca's uncle Mr. Schönberg is arranging for tickets. It is difficult to travel nowadays, but I have talked to Mrs. Callendar and she has written to a friend of hers, Malcolm Travers, the banker, who will arrange passports for you. You will hear from him within a few days after this letter."

And about her own plans she wrote, "I am marrying Richard Callendar, the son of the same Mrs. Callendar. You remember her? You met her on the night of my first concert in America, a small, fat dark woman covered with dirty diamonds. You may have read of the family in the papers, for they are well known. They are very rich. He is four years older than me. I have known him for nearly ten years. He wanted to marry me before, years ago. (And then a sudden flash of the old Ellen who had

walked away in the sunlight to skate on Walker's Pond.) Fancy me, marrying a millionaire!"

So, in an instant, everything was changed and Hattie's world grew bright once more. It was all so preposterous—to have Ellen arranging everything in this grand manner, the tickets, the passports, as if her mother were a queen whose journey was to be made as simple and free of trouble as possible. And the cheque and the millionaire husband! Yet, when the sense of excitement had abated a little, she remembered that she had always known her children were not of ordinary flesh and blood. There had been something extraordinary about them. Look at Ellen! Famous and rich and now marrying a millionaire.

But her satisfaction was not free from the old doubts. Was he—this Callendar—good enough for her? Clarence had never been. It was a good thing, she reflected, that he had died. What could she have done with him during all these years . . . Clarence, a poor thing at best, always complaining of his health.

But this Callendar. Who was he and why had she never spoken of him before? Surely she was a strange girl who kept such secrets so passionately hidden. Where had he come from? Was he of good healthy stock? What had his life been? For a time she paced up and down the room in a ferment of curiosity. She tried to imagine what sort of man Ellen would choose to marry. (This time she must be marrying only for love; there could be no other reason.) She tried again and again to picture him and she found herself baffled. It was impossible to imagine. . . .

And when she had grown more calm and the sense of the dreary flat was borne in upon her once more, she remembered The Everlasting. He was ninety-five, and yet not really an old man; his mind had never faltered in its course. But he was feeble and needed care. She could not desert him now. She deceived herself into believing that it was her duty to care for him until he died; and only the Almighty knew when that would be. No, she must take him with her. She could not leave him, as Ellen suggested, in some home for the aged. That would be wrong; it would be, in a

sense, indecent. He was after all the father of her husband, the grandfather of her children. One could not do a thing like that. She debated the matter with herself for hours, thinking, strangely enough, only of reasons why she *should* take him; and it never once occurred to her that she really had no desire *not* to take him. The arguments against it were simply the habit of an intermittent civil war that had endured for more than thirty years. She could not bear to leave him behind, any more than she could have borne it to leave behind the old clothes, the worn shoes, and the Bible she had given Fergus on his tenth birthday. Gramp was a fixture now, a part of the past. Without him she would feel lost and lonely.

When she told him the intoxicating news, the old man, with a wariness that placed no trust in their unreal truce, looked at her sharply and said, doubtfully, "I don't know, Hattie. I'm too old and too feeble. I think perhaps I'd better stay behind." He opposed the idea in the belief that if he opposed it she would insist upon its being carried through.

But she was firm. She would not even argue the matter. He must go with her to Paris. He would be quite as well off there as anywhere else and he would at least be where she could look after him.

"Much better off," thought Gramp, whose only desire was to see Paris again before he died. But he still maintained a resentful air as if he opposed the idea with his last breath but was far too feeble to offer any real resistance.

IN Paris the house in the Rue Raynouard was got ready for the arrival. It had begun again to take on a little of the old gaiety and sense of life, for it had passed through the depths of its depression in the days which first Lily and then Ellen had spent there alone in their sorrow. All things pass in time and so

the grief and loneliness had begun to pass from the house. Lily, as the shrewd Rebecca predicted during her first quarrel with Ellen, found in time some one to console her for the loss of César. It was impossible that one so simple, so without complexities, should have gone on mourning; Lily lived as much in the present as Ellen lived in the future. Her consoler was the grave, dignified Monsieur de Cyon (the same white-haired gentleman connected with the government, whom Fergus had met at tea) the widower of "Tiens! Tiens!" de Cyon, whom Ellen had loathed long ago when she first came to the Rue Raynouard. He was glad no doubt to have been freed by death from the crêpe-laden "Tiens! Tiens!" and satisfied to have found so agreeable a creature as Lily—a woman whom he described to his friends as dignified, worldly, cultivated and beautiful, not omitting the fact that she was very rich and that she was an American, a factor of political importance at a moment when America was so necessary to Europe in general and to France in particular.

And Lily too was, in her casual way, content with such a marriage. In the room, smelling of scent and powder, where she had exchanged other confidences with Ellen, she said, "He is a gentleman and distinguished. Perhaps he may be in the next cabinet. I am rich. I can help him. And as for me . . ." She laughed softly, with a touch of the old abandon in her voice. "He will not bother me much. He is an old man." But she was grave too when she spoke again. "And I . . . I am no longer young. I am forty-three. I must begin to look about for something to take the place of youth. I shall make him a good wife. I shall be able to entertain and give dinners that will help him and I will have a position that I have never had before."

And then she grew thoughtful and added, "It will be good for Jean too. It is time he had a father . . . a thing he has never had. It is time that I stepped out of the picture and made way for him."

She had lived, if not a life beyond reproach, one that was at least discreet and marked by good taste, and so the other things.

since the world is as it is, did not matter. Of those who had really known her secret only three remained . . . Ellen and Hattie and Jean. César and Madame Gigon and Old Julia were dead. It did not, of course, occur to her to include The Everlasting, who had known all the while.

Jean too was happier now, for he had grown used to wandering about on crutches and had become accustomed to a new leg, made so admirably that he could still ride as much as he liked. It would have been impossible for him to have remained depressed; there was too much of Lily in him and, it must not be forgotten, he resembled Fergus greatly. The old friendship between him and Ellen waxed stronger than ever. It seemed to her at times that Fergus had returned or had never died at all. In the evenings while his mother sat talking quietly in the big soft drawing room with Monsieur de Cyon, Ellen joined him at the piano in playing with four hands the wildest songs out of the music halls. Rebecca in rare moments of good humor added to the gaiety with imitations of poor old Sarah Bernhardt or Mistinguette or Spinelly.

Rebecca had long since come to make herself at home in the big house. She was settled now in one of the rooms opening on the long gallery and she was perpetually with them, for it never occurred to Lily to offer objections to one more guest; but, having nothing to occupy her time, she grew irritable and restless. Her occupation had gone suddenly and there remained nothing to absorb her energy. Ellen remained stubborn and mysterious. She would not return to America where there was a fortune awaiting her.

"I have enough," she said. "I need not work myself to death. I am rich now. I am through with struggling. Whenever I see fit I can return."

But to Rebecca, it must have seemed that Ellen had slipped somehow out of her reach, beyond the control which she had once held over her. She would not even quarrel as they had once done

so often and with such vigor. She would simply repeat, "No. When I am ready, I will tell you. I am going to rest for a time."

It was her contentment that clearly had the power of disturbing Rebecca. She seemed at times almost happy. The old wilfulness and caprice were gone, and when she sat at the piano with Jean, there were times when it even seemed that she was enveloped by a hard, bright gaiety, touched, it is true, by hysteria and bitterness. She was unmanageable in a way she had never been.

"You are deceiving me," Rebecca reproached her. "There is something that I don't know. You are keeping something from me." And she would grow tearful and descend to the rich depths of Oriental sentiment. "Me," she would repeat, beating her thin breast, "who have given my life for you . . . who have worked myself to the bone . . . given all my time. . . . For no other reason than to make you a success. It is shameful."

And Ellen, in her new wisdom, might have answered, "Because you have found the thing you were born to do. Because you were aimless till you fastened upon me. . . . Because you found happiness in taking possession of me and my life."

But she said none of these things because it seemed to her that quarreling was useless. She only laughed and replied, "And you told the most wonderful lies about me. . . . You created Lilli Barr but Lilli Barr is having a rest now. I am being myself . . . Ellen Tolliver . . . for a little time."

Still Rebecca, too wise to be put off with such answers, only looked at her with suspicion and remained sulky. She could not run off now to visit Uncle Otto and Aunt Lina in Vienna nor the aunt in Riga nor the cousins in Trieste. She could not even make a round of the watering places, for all those which were not closed or filled with wounded soldiers lay on the other side of the circus parade that had begun to draw near to the end. One could almost hear the distant toots of the steam calliope, manned and manipulated by politicians, that fetched up the rear.

July had passed and with it the last peril to Paris, but still Calendar did not return. She heard from him whenever he had time to write. They were busy now (he wrote). They were beginning to look toward the end. The arrival of the Americans had done much for the French, not that they counted for much because there were not enough of them, but because, simply, they were *there*. He had kept on the *qui vive* for her other brother—Robert—but he had not come across him. It was not strange since his own division was nowhere near the Americans. Still he might see him. . . . One could never tell. . . . They expected to be shifted soon eastward in the direction of the (here the word was deleted), quite near to the Americans. It was easy for him to make himself acquainted since he was, after all, half-American.

And he would write again and again, "Do not worry about me. I have the most incredible luck—always. There are some men who go through the thing *knowing* that nothing will ever happen to them. I *know* it. It's a feeling that is in the bones. In the worst messes, I have that feeling . . . so strong that it is physical. 'Nothing will happen to me . . . nothing whatever,' I find myself repeating over and over again."

And as she read this, it occurred to her again that such a belief belonged to the part of him which had always been strange to her—the part which escaped in some nameless fashion even the limits of her imagination. It was mystical and profound and uncanny. At the very moment that she knew he must be right in his faith, she was terrified too because he was so certain. She could not believe with such intensity save in herself. Her beliefs were related always to the power, the force which she herself had at her own command; and in all the senseless, miserable killing there was no power which lay in one's self. It was simply a monstrous game of chance with the odds all against one.

But she found a happiness in those letters of a sort which she had never imagined. It seemed to her that in some way a part of herself was there with him enduring the same hardships and dan-

gers, and for the first time in all her life she touched the borders of the satisfaction which comes of sharing an experience. She was troubled no longer by doubts; now that she had given her word, it never occurred to her to change. There was relief in the knowledge that all the years of indecision were at an end. There was satisfaction in feeling that the thing had been settled.

But she was abashed at the bold passion with which he wrote, shamelessly, assailing the wall of her fierce reserve. She was abashed and yet triumphant, for in all the years of struggle she had forgotten at times that she was a woman and young. His letters made her know for a little time some of the joy which Lily had possessed since the beginning.

He wrote at length that Sabine's divorce was completed. "I am free now and will have a leave soon, so we can try then to make up for all the wasted years. Because they have been wasted. We should have been married long ago. We should have been courageous enough to have cut through the tangle and set things right. We were cowardly then. It is tragic that we only learn through long experience that wastes so much of joy, so much of happiness. But you are mine now . . . mine forever. I shall never lose you again. . . ."

But the letter troubled her strangely; it invoked with each line some disturbing memory of the past. The allusion to courage. . . . Who could say what had been courage and what cowardice? If the matter had rested with Callendar alone, it would have been solved because he had had what he believed was courage. He would have thrust poor Clarence aside and trampled upon him, to take ruthlessly what he himself desired. It had been a courage different from hers, whose foundations stood rooted in self-denial. Yet she had saved no one in the end, not even Clarence. Some power, in which Callendar placed such faith, had brought them together in the end, destroying Clarence despite anything she could do to save him. And it seemed to her that all the trouble, all the sorrow went back to that winter evening on the shore of

Walker's Pond when she had said "Yes" to Clarence and felt for him at the same moment a queer, inarticulate pity—a pity which she was beginning at last to understand.

She experienced again a fierce satisfaction, almost a pleasure, which Callendar, in the strangeness of his blood, would never know. It was the satisfaction in having dominated even one's own body.

But in the last lines there lay an echo of the old conflict. *You will be mine . . . mine forever. I will never lose you again.* It was an arrogant speech, so like the way he had come to her years ago in the Babylon Arms, not asking what she desired but simply taking for granted that she would do as he wished. The memory of that afternoon disturbed her again with the sense that this love of which he wrote was an obscene, middle-aged emotion worn by a too great experience. The freshness was gone and with it all the glow of their meetings in the open windows of Sherry's and the walks through the Spring in Central Park. . . . It was this knowledge perhaps more than any other, that made his passionate phrases seem shameful. All of that first youth was gone from them, yet he posed, he wrote her still in the same ardent phrases, grown threadbare and unconvincing, of a love that had once been clean and fresh and despite all that she knew, even then, virginal. There was a touch now that bordered upon the professional. . . .

He told her that Sabine was in Paris and might pay her a call, as much out of a gossip's curiosity as from her curious passion for knowing the truth, for knowing with a blazing clarity exactly how things stood.

Sabine did call, in her small, expensive motor, accompanied by little Thérèse, an awkward, sickly girl of ten, but Ellen sent word that she was out. She had no desire to see Sabine, perhaps because she feared what Sabine had to tell her. And she could not turn back now; for too many years she had followed a straight unswerving path.

IT was a fantastic journey for Hattie and The Everlasting. On passports arranged by Thérèse Callendar they were borne along a way made easy by all the power behind Thérèse Callendar's fortune, through all the hubbub and turmoil of the war. Their companions on shipboard were correspondents and doctors and nurses and soldiers and congressmen (bound for the front to garner out of the very graves material for new campaigns). The others aboard the ship must have found them a strange pair concerning whom it was possible to speculate endlessly—this handsome, grim woman and the old, old man in her charge. It is probable that no one ever learned precisely who they were or whither they were bound, for Hattie was a suspicious traveler who placed no trust in fellow voyagers. She warned them away by her looks; and Gramp, of course, had not the faintest desire to enter upon conversation. He read his books and once a day made a circuit, under the escort of Hattie, of the entire deck, his coonskin coat (from which he refused to be separated) blowing in and out against his skinny old body. He never spoke, even to Hattie, even in reply to such remarks as, "Now, Grandpa, you must not eat that," or "Now, Grandpa, you had best move your chair, there's a draft in that corner."

(All this to Gramp who had never denied himself anything and had a perfect digestion; who had never thought of drafts since he was born.)

Indeed, there was something touching in the spectacle of the middle-aged woman, tending so carefully the old, old man. It was as if she feared that he might by some ill chance be blown from the deck into the open sea or fall down a companionway and shatter forever the brittle old bones that had defied time itself. No one could have guessed that they were enemies, that despite the temporary truce they could never be anything but enemies by the very nature of things. Hattie treated him still as if he

were some fragile piece of old glass which she must deliver safely to Lily's house in the Rue Raynouard.

It was only after she had seen him safely to bed in his cabin that she was able to give range to all her passionate energy and walk round and round the deck, her ostrich plumes blowing in the gale, her strong, buxom figure outlined against the luminous blue of the Atlantic night. At such times she was almost happy again for it seemed to her that in the winds and fogs Fergus was somewhere close at hand, just beyond reach, waiting for her.

And she was going now to take up once more the threads of life. Ellen was to be married. . . . Ellen was to be married. . . . She must have a child. . . . She must have a child. . . . These things she thought over and over again until she came at length to repeat them aloud to herself as she walked, bracing her body against the gale, through the darkness. She had joined Thérèse Callendar in this passionate desire for a grandchild, but it was not for the same reason. To Hattie a grandchild would alter everything. It would be for her like being young again, almost like bearing a child of her own.

She had never traveled before; she knew not a word of French and The Everlasting saw fit not to reveal his knowledge of the tongue; but she was undaunted. In some way, by an heroic effort touched with a profound scorn for a nation which chattered such an abominable tongue, she managed everything . . . the customs at Havre, the accommodations in hotels already crowded to the doors and, last of all, the journey from the port into the Gare du Nord. (Lily had sent a courier to meet her but the meeting never occurred.) She was indomitable and she was almost happy again in all the business of managing tickets and meals and luggage, shepherding The Everlasting and his precious books. For Hattie believed that nothing was impossible. . . .

From the corridor of the crowded train, where she stood protecting Gramp and jostling her fellow passengers, Hattie saw

them standing on the platform of the smoking cave called the Gare du Nord. . . . Ellen and Lily and a dark man in a blue uniform: and as the train jolted to a halt, her own car (for she thought of it thus) stopped almost abreast of them so that she was able to see that they talked earnestly with grave faces and an air of preoccupation. Wedged between a poilu slung round with a dozen musettes and wine bottles, and a trim English colonel with white mustaches and a red face, she was held immovable, unable to signal to them though she pounded upon the glass and shouted to them through windows open by some miracle against the stifling September heat. To Hattie, nothing existed in all that echoing cavern save those three figures, standing together amid mountains of luggage.

In the resounding shed steam hissed and engines squealed in ridiculous Gallic fashion; soldiers shouted to one another and a cocotte just beneath her window cried ribald jests to a lover somewhere in the same car who joined in the shouts of laughter. They looked up and down the platform—those three. It seemed that years passed before Lily, turning languidly in the heat, caught a glimpse of Hattie's red and agitated face and Gramp's sharp nose and inscrutable eyes.

They moved toward her; the English colonel whose toes had been trampled gave way in indignation and Hattie, bearing an immense amount of luggage and followed indifferently by Gramp, descended to the platform.

Ellen kissed her and then Lily, and at last she heard Ellen saying, "This is Richard, Ma. He is on leave."

Above all the flurry and the conversation, she and Callendar regarded each other searchingly, the one with a piercing gaze of appraisal, the other with an air almost of astonishment. He had not, perhaps, pictured her as such a handsome woman, nor one, despite the grimness on which one could not put one's finger, of such immense gusto. She accounted for Ellen's strength and vitality, but there was clearly nothing subtle in her and nothing cold: the answer to all that lay elsewhere—perhaps in the ancient

man who peered at them all like a spiteful mouse through his dim spectacles.

As for Hattie, her eyes asked only one thing, "Was he—this man—good enough for Ellen?" His foreign blood showed itself more plainly than she had expected. It troubled her that her daughter should be marrying a man of foreign blood; for, vaguely, all foreigners were associated in her mind with those dark, sullen, violent men who worked in the black Mills surrounding Shane's Castle.

There flashed between the two—Callendar and Hattie—no spark either of understanding or enmity. Rather it seemed that the opinions of both were colored by surprise and a touch of suspicion. In Hattie's eyes there was a fire of pride and possession, the look of one who would fight for her children, passionately; and in the gray eyes of Callendar there was only the opaque, inscrutable expression which only Ellen, of them all, had ever seen dissolve or change.

But they were grave, all of them, in a fashion that presently entered Hattie's spirit and made her feel that their welcome was lacking in enthusiasm. Perhaps (she thought) it was the war; they were so close to it and Ellen, like herself, must be thinking always of Fergus. Perhaps they did not really want her there . . . any of them. Yet they had written her with so much eagerness. It was a doubt that filled her with a sharp terror of growing old and useless and dependent.

Lily (whom she had not seen in years, Lily who was now Madame de Cyon) seemed scarcely changed at all. She could not be (Hattie, watching her, hastily calculated the years) she could not be a day less than forty-five; yet there she was, a woman who had sinned, looking young, almost fresh, scarcely a day older than Ellen who was twelve years younger . . . more plump than Ellen and, strangely enough, more soft. Still, Hattie reflected, with a grim satisfaction, she had painted her face, and her hair, it was certain, had been "touched up."

Perhaps in Paris all life was different; perhaps such a life

as Lily's made not too great a difference. Looking at her cousin, so beautiful, so charming and so unnaturally young, all the deep rooted respectability of Hattie's nature rose and bristled. And as she stood on the steps of the Gare du Nord waiting for Callendar to fetch the gray blue Government motor to drive them to the Rue Raynouard, it swept over her that it was a strange and ridiculous turn of affairs which had brought her of all people "into the wickedest city in the world," to live in the house of Lily whom she had always distrusted. She had not thought of it until this moment when she stood looking out across the Place Roubaix.

The motor came abreast of them with Callendar—a stranger, a foreigner—at the wheel, driving with a cool recklessness. It was all weird and unreal, so preposterous that Hattie grew suddenly frightened. She was aware briefly of a terror at the spectacle of this new, strange city where every one spoke an ungodly language. A little while before she would not even have thought of such things. It occurred to her that she must be growing old.

"I never felt younger in my life," she repeated aloud to Lily who stood waiting for her to enter the motor.

All this time The Everlasting had said nothing. Watching the others he had kept his own silence, but he had not overlooked the Paris that lay all about him, so changed now, so different, from the Paris of his youth. He heard none of their talk, made almost laboriously against the inexplicable depression, as they drove through the Rue Lafayette. How could it have interested him who was concerned with another world . . . ? A world of gaslight and crinoline, imperials and the waltzes of Strauss and Waldteufel? To him, who had no future, this new Paris must have been less than nothing . . . this new Paris in which Lily with all her money out of the black mills in the Middle West had a house and lived as if she had been born a Parisian; this new Paris in which his own granddaughter played a brilliant part. It was a Paris. . . . How could one describe it?

Yet, as he rode over the sweltering asphalt, his eyes, his ears, his nose drank in the sights and sounds and smells . . . the sudden cry of "L'Intran! . . . L'Intran!" and "Le Petit Parisien!" the withered dying chestnut trees of the Boulevard Haussmann (he could remember when it was new), the little tables . . . Because youth was after an insidious fashion returning to him, Gramp, the bitter, the aloof, grew sentimental. It had been here, in this Paris, that he had climbed to the pinnacle of all his life, the summit from which all else had been a gentle decline. He had not died like Fergus. He had gone on and on until at last life itself had lost all its savor. . . .

They had turned now round Arc de Triomphe, and Ellen, sitting quietly by the side of Callendar, frowned. She had been silent throughout the drive, thinking, thinking, thinking bitterly with a savage secrecy because she dared not betray herself even by the flicker of an eyelid. She sat there silently, pondering how she might break the news which she herself and no other must in the end relate. It seemed to her that the whole affair was too cruel, too horrible. It was not possible that she should be forced twice to do the same terrible thing.

The sound of her mother's voice, cheerful and rich, as she talked to Lily came to her over her shoulder. . . . "And the man wouldn't open the window so in the end I opened it myself and then he began to chatter and yell at me in some ridiculous language . . . French perhaps."

"How was he dressed?" asked Lily, and Hattie described his uniform.

"Oh," replied Lily in mirth. "He was Portuguese. . . . You must never mind the Portuguese."

"Well, I don't know whether Portuguese smell worse than other nationalities but the air in that train was enough to suffocate a strong man."

. . . And now they were coming nearer and nearer to the 'Trocadéro. They were quite near now. Ellen turned away her eyes. They had passed the house in the Avenue Kléber. She

caught a swift glimpse of the doorway which she had not seen since the bright morning she closed the door on the frivolous little room of Madame Nozières. Ah, she knew how it looked! She knew each tiny thing about it, and the gray courtyard with the summer furniture heaped into one corner. It was cruel, incredible . . . what she had to do.

Before they drew up to the door of the house in the Rue Raynouard, Hattie too had grown silent under the gray depression which claimed all the little party.

They had tea on the white terrace where they found the black dog and poor tottering old Crikette and were joined by Jean and Monsieur de Cyon, and Rebecca, whose sulkiness did nothing to raise the spirits of the party. It was, Lily remarked, as she sat behind a table laden with silver and flowers sent up from Germigny and the most delicate sandwiches of pâté and cheese and jam, like a great family reunion. The big house was full now; Lily was married, even with distinction. There were no more secrets. In some ways life had grown simple, yet in others its complexity had been increased, again and again.

Ellen, sitting there in her own pool of tragic silence, watched them all with the old knowledge that their lives were all in some way entangled and bound up together . . . all that absurd and ill assorted group, Monsieur de Cyon, gentle and white haired, Hattie, Rebecca, Jean, Lily, Callendar and herself; and even Gramp who had disappeared already into the solitude of the room which Lily had given him. Here they all were, most of them—even de Cyon, himself, a foreigner—living on the wealth poured out by the black mills of a town in the Midlands of America. And she it was who had brought them together.

Watching her mother, it occurred to her that the indomitable Hattie was no longer young. She would ask presently to be shown the room where Fergus had died, and Ellen, still lying, would show it to her, and her mother would weep and be satis-

fied in a pitiful fashion with the deception. It was better sometimes to lie, better to deceive.

But the other thing . . . She rose presently and walked away down into the garden where she was joined after a little time by Jean on his crutches and Hansi, panting and restless at being kept in the summer heat of the city. And when she had gone Rebecca drifted away with an air of resentful martyrdom. She would have been nasty to Hattie, if she had dared, just as she had been nasty to Callendar who was only amused by her and took pains to show her in a thousand small ways that Ellen belonged to him now, and that she, Rebecca, no longer counted. But Rebecca could wait; there was the same blood in both and Rebecca understood how his game was played. She could wait, she thought bitterly, as she went up to her own room. The game was not yet over and she had not yielded the victory. She knew, perhaps better than any of the others, even Ellen, what to expect of Callendar. There was no part of him which remained a mystery to her, for she knew the men of her own family . . . the Uncle Ottos and Maximilians and Gustaves, all with a touch of the Levant. But Ellen would never believe her; she would believe only that Rebecca was jealous of him (which was true) and that what she said was uttered only out of spite. She would not believe that he was really cruel and domineering and thought of women as creatures who belonged in a harem. . . . Sabine could have helped her, but Sabine whom she had never met had been turned away from the door.

No, she had not yet lost the battle. She must save Ellen as much because she herself needed her as on Ellen's own account. She climbed the long stairs and left Lily and de Cyon, Hattie and Callendar together on the terrace, talking under the guidance of Callendar, who led them gracefully here and there, finding, it seemed, a strange satisfaction in ignoring the terrible knowledge which he shared only with Lily and Ellen. Lily, watching him, must have thought him inhumanly cold. Perhaps it occurred to

her again, in the depths of her wisdom and experience, that this marriage of Ellen could end in only one way.

Meanwhile under the old plane trees Ellen, who had been walking up and down in silence with Jean and the dogs, took the departure of Monsieur de Cyon for the white pavilion (which Lily had had fitted up for him as a sort of study) as a signal to return. On the terrace she said to Callendar, "I shan't come down until dinner. If you want to see your mother before she sails, you had best go now. I'll be free later," and so dismissed him.

Then, turning to her mother, she said, "Come Ma, we'll go up and get you settled in your room," and led her away leaving the garden to Lily and Jean and fat old Criquette.

Hattie, who had noticed nothing either in the streets or in the house itself (for, as Ellen knew, she did not see its beauty but saw it only as the house which it might be said belonged to Ellen), noticed as she walked through the big drawing-room that it resembled Shane's Castle in its warm, soft beauty. The portrait of old John Shane with a white setter at his feet, and the glowing Venice of Mr. Turner which had once hung in the house among the Mills now found places against the satinwood paneling. She fancied too that she recognized the Aubusson carpet, connected dimly in her memory with the picture of old Julia, hawk-like and bitter, tracing the outlines of the extravagant flowers with her stick of ebony and silver.

"It's like the castle," she murmured to Ellen, who hurried on up the stairs without heeding her.

They turned off along the gallery and, as they passed one of the doors, the squeaking of Gramp's rocking chair (unpacked and long since placed in readiness by Lily) came to them through the paneling. Time went on. People were born and people died, but The Everlasting and his rocking chair remained the same.

"He's better now than he used to be," observed Hattie. She

did not mention him by name, for Ellen knew well enough whom she meant; together they had passed his door, together they had heard the same rhythmical squeaking a thousand times. In a sense the sound of the decrepit rocker bound them to each other in a way that nothing else could have done. It was the one thing that remained constant, unchanged, out of all the past.

Hattie's room—the room to which she had come to spend the rest of her life—was large and airy with two tall windows which opened on the garden where Lily had taken Ellen's place and was now walking up and down, up and down, with her tall red-haired son. He was a man now and it made Hattie tremble to think how little difference his improper existence had made. There in the garden, under the old trees, it seemed of no importance that he had never had, in the proper sense, a father. He belonged there, with Lily. There was a rightness about the whole thing which Hattie sensed from afar off but was unable to explain . . . a vague feeling that Lily's life had been, despite everything, a life complete and in the proper key, like a beautiful painting superbly drawn and executed with all the boldness of a sure hand. Lily perhaps had led the life for which she was born. Hattie saw that she was telling the boy something which had led her to weep, for she lifted her handkerchief to her eyes and the boy halted to face her with his brow crinkled into little furrows. He was so like Fergus. . . .

And in the next instant she knew what it was that Lily had said. Ellen put her arms about her mother and murmured in a low voice, "I have some bad news, Ma."

And Hattie, looking at her in a queer stony fashion, replied, "I know what it is. Robert too is dead."

It was true. Little by little, while her mother sat listening in the same stony silence, Ellen told the whole story. It was Callendar who had brought the news. He had come from the front on leave this very morning. There—somewhere in the Argonne—he had come across Robert's regiment and there they

had become acquainted. And then on the night before Callendar left, he had been sent for by one of the Americans. He had gone to a dressing station, but Robert was dead when he arrived. He had been wounded while saving one of his own men caught among the barbed wire between the German lines and his own. The man had been saved; he would live. It was he who had told Callendar the whole story, he who in a sort of delirium had described the whole affair with a fantastic poetry . . . the fog that had settled over the lines, the swift, brilliant flare of the Veery lights, the faint, malicious, pop! pop! of the gas shells as they buried their noses so neatly in the earth. It was in this wild, unearthly setting that Robert had given up his life. Robert (thought Hattie) who had said, "There's nothing romantic about war. . . . The side which is the most efficient . . . There won't be any nonsense. . . . I'll look out for myself."

When Ellen had finished they were both silent for a time and at last, Hattie, still dry eyed, said in a firm voice, "It is a judgment . . . I love my children too well . . . better than my own God and now they have been taken from me."

(If only it had been Robert . . . And now it was Robert too.)

She lay down on the great bed, a strange, incongruous figure—this grim, primitive, black-clad woman—in the midst of all the luxury that Lily had provided. And presently she said, "I'd like to be alone for a time, Ellen. I'll call you . . . later on."

So Ellen left her mother in solitude, but as the door closed behind her she knew that it was herself upon whom the remnants of her family—Hattie and The Everlasting—now depended. It was she who, after all these years in which she had neglected and forgotten them, had become the rock, the foundation. And she knew too that there could no longer be any doubt about marrying Callendar. She would have to marry now . . . Now that Robert, too, was gone there were new reasons. There remained only one thing that she could do for her mother. It might as well be Callendar as any other man.

THEY were married a month before the armistice, quietly with only Monsieur de Cyon and Lily and Jean and Hattie at the ceremony. It was the family once more (the remnants of the vigorous family which had once filled the drawing-room at Shane's Castle) which dominated all else in fitting fashion at such events as births and deaths and weddings. Thérèse was not present, for Ellen had decided quickly and there was not time for her to return from New York. Nor was Rebecca there. A week before the wedding there had been a scene in which Rebecca played all her cards in a forlorn hope of winning the game against Callendar. She had told Ellen that she herself was a Jewess and knew what men like Callendar were like. She had told her that he was cruel and domineering and that all his patience, all his quiet aloofness only covered the steel of a will which she would come in time to know too well. She said that in the end he would do his best to destroy her, not alone as a musician but as a woman. And Ellen listened quietly, secure against it all in the knowledge of the new duty that lay before her. It was not until Rebecca in a perfect debauch of fury screamed at her, "He is marrying you only to break your will . . . to destroy you. It is that which lies behind it all. . . . A conflict. . . . I know. . . . A conflict. He has wanted it all these years," that Ellen grew white and terrifying and told her to go.

"I never want to see you again," she said. "I am grateful for what you have done, but you cannot arrange all my life for me. What you say is a lie. . . . It isn't true. You say it all because you can no longer plan my whole life."

So Rebecca had gone, her bright ferret eyes red and savage. On the long stairs she met Callendar coming in but she did not so much as glance at him. In her heart she had not yet yielded the victory. She would defeat him in the end. She

would let him defeat himself, for she knew he was certain to do it.

It was de Cyon himself who arranged the transfer of Callendar to the African service, and so it happened that they went to Tunis for the honeymoon to a villa on the outskirts of the city which belonged to one of Thérèse's Greek cousins, a man who served as head of the Mediterranean banks of Leopopulos et Cie. Ellen wrote to them regularly, letters which were like all the others she had ever written her mother since that first one from the Babylon Arms, restrained, careful and filled with a host of details from which one could gather nothing, and at the end always the same comment on the weather and the beauty of their garden with a brief line to the effect that "we are well and happy."

In the Rue Raynouard, Gramp lived the same life that he had lived for thirty years. He had his books (for Hattie was rich now and expense no longer mattered) and he had his rocking chair placed absurdly among the Empire furniture of the room which Lily had given him. Nothing had changed save that his windows looked out upon a garden laid out by Le Nôtre and that he could hear the whistles of the boats on the Seine and that he went sometimes afoot on solitary expeditions through the neighboring streets, once as far as the Invalides. It was his habit to steal away secretly through the gate in the garden wall leading into the Rue de Passy. He remained inscrutable, uncommunicative and aloof, save with Jean for whom he displayed a fancy. And none of them knew that the thing he was looking for on these solitary meanderings was a youth which had returned to him now with an unearthly clarity, though there were moments when he was childish and could not remember that he was in Paris or what had happened to him only yesterday.

And Hattie, living now with Lily, began slowly to regain her interest in life. She took to inspecting the big house room by

room to see that it was properly cared for; she quarreled in a stifled, incoherent fashion with Augustine and the other servants; she fussed about the garden, insensible to its beauty, and interested only in its order. She even undertook after a time to do the marketing herself when she discovered with horror that the shopkeepers paid old Mélanie the housekeeper a commission on what she purchased.

So Lily, for a third time, turned over the possession of her house to another. Madame Gigon had once treated it as her own and after her César and Ellen had quarreled over it. And now, willingly, she delivered it into the keeping of Hattie who had greater need of it than any of the others. She told the servants that they must not mind Madame Tolliver's eccentric behavior and she made up to old Mélanie the amount of her commissions. But even if she had not done these things, they would not have left her, for Lily understood servants and had a way with them. Old Mélanie had been with her for more than twenty years, since Lily had come to Madame Gigon, a little frightened but resolved, none the less, never to marry Jean's father.

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SABINE, in her defeat, did not complain. In all the business of the divorce, she conducted herself as she had always done, with an amazing control; so that no one, not even Thérèse, was able to discover whether she was willing or not to release the pretense of a possession she had held over Callendar for so many years. They talked it over quite calmly, arranging all the details in the most business-like and efficient fashion, under the guidance of that short, frumpy, powerful old woman, Thérèse, who appeared to know the law as thoroughly as she knew the world of banking. There was no word spoken in anger or in

haste. The withdrawal of Sabine from the position of wife was executed with as superb an air of indifference as her entrance into the rôle.

"I want no settlement and no allowance," she had said as the three of them sat about the tea table in the small sitting room of the house in the Avenue du Bois. "Whatever you care to do for little Thérèse is, of course, your own affair. She is yours as much as mine. (A lie, she thought, because they did not care for her at all.) I have all I want."

And the leave-taking had been like the departure of a woman from the office of her lawyer. There was no anger and there were no tears. Sabine rose and said, "I will go now. . . . I have taken a house in the Rue Tilsit. I shall be there in case you want me. I do not know the telephone but I will send it to you."

Thérèse bent over the table and, gathering up the papers with her fat glittering fingers, thrust them into the reticule in which she kept her important documents . . . a moldy old bag continually in a state of confusion, from which she was able by a sort of magic to produce on a moment's notice any paper she required. As she sat watching her, it occurred to Sabine that the old woman's Levantine blood had begun to claim her entirely. It was not only the diamonds and emeralds which now stood in need of cleaning; the heavy black clothes which Thérèse wore even in the hottest weather were now sometimes stained and discolored, and she had taken to carrying fragments of biscuits among the papers of her reticule, which she took out from time to time and nibbled with the furtive air of a fat squirrel. She was more near-sighted than ever and squinted up her eyes until they became mere slits through which appeared the glitter of two tiny brilliant lights. All the charm was slipping slowly away from her eccentricity; the queer abrupt manner, which in the height of her power had seemed amusing and original, was slowly turning into the queerness of an untidy old Greek woman.

Watching her, she thought, "God willing, I shall never turn

into such a grubby old woman. I shall care for myself to the very end. I shall die, handsomely dressed, with my hair in perfect order and with my corsets on. She is a Levantine after all. She might be an old woman with a fruit stand in the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge."

(Thérèse with the glitter in her dark almond eyes, poking about in a reticule that contained a vast fortune in securities.)

Callendar walked with her through the comic opera hallway and out to her motor where, with a great courtliness, he saw her step in and closed the door after her.

"Good-by," he murmured quietly. "If there is anything you want, let me know."

So although for a time it had seemed that all the cards were turning up for her, she had in the end lost her game of patience. She had lost it, she reflected, to Ellen Tolliver whom she had neglected to respect sufficiently—a crude, uncivilized mountebank brought in to amuse the guests in the house on Murray Hill. What was the secret that lay behind all the mystery?

As the motor drove away, it occurred to her that the parting had been like one between strangers. She had been to them, then, nothing at all; she might have been a clerk employed in some branch of the Leopopulos bank, a creature who had been of use to them and whom they sent away when her usefulness was ended, willing to pension her if she desired it, like an old family employee. More than twelve years she had given to them . . . years in which she tried, desperately, heart-breakingly to establish some bond that was too strong to be broken in this cold, matter-of-fact fashion. More than twelve years she had struggled against something which was stronger, far stronger, than her own will and self-possession. And now they sent her away without more than a formal good-by. . . . Thérèse had her fortune still, vaster than it had ever been. Nothing else mattered.

She took out the mirror from the side of her motor and fell to examining her face. Here at least the twelve years had not

taken the toll that might have been expected. There was no gray in the brick-red hair that lay under the small, chic gray hat. The narrow intelligent eyes, set close together, were as bright as they had ever been, and the white skin, like the thick petals of a camelia, was as perfect as ever beneath the superbly disguised powder and rouge. She touched the tip of her long nose with an immaculately gloved finger, and it occurred to her that the face which looked out of the tiny rectangle of glass was a mask, really,—an admirably fashioned mask which concealed effectively a turbulence none would ever have imagined lay beneath it. They managed things better in these days: once she would have been expected to retire from the field with a broken heart, to exploit, as it were, her own suffering; to swoon and weep . . . like Lady Byron.

She looked, she felt, remarkably young; but not young enough. She could not, she thought, begin all over again; there was not time. She was past forty now. She might marry again . . . a man her own age or older, but that would not be the same. She had given what youth she possessed (beneath that hard, controlled exterior) to Callendar and Thérèse. There was not a chance of her ever being young in the way she had once been, of loving with a fierce abandon that her pride had forced her to conceal. (She fancied that they had never discovered how much and how shamefully she had loved him, yet she could not be certain. Probably he knew this too.)

She put away the mirror and, leaning back, fell to thinking, with all her cold honesty, that she would even return to him now if he so much as lifted a finger in her direction. There had been in all their life together no memory of a violent scene, no memory of blows or accusations . . . nothing about which she could build up a hatred or sense of repulsion. There had been nothing since little Thérèse was born save that aloof, courteous indifference which it had been impossible to shatter. And for a time she tried to imagine what would have happened if once—only once—

he had for a moment melted and behaved toward her as if she had been more than a mere institution, more than a wife whom one protected and to whom one was always courteous.

And old Thérèse . . . Once Sabine had fancied that they were friends. They had been, she remembered, congenial, almost alike in their point of view, in the angle from which they looked out upon the world. And then Thérèse had slipped away, slowly, imperceptibly in a fashion that it was impossible to define. There had been no quarrel, no bandying of words, yet they had come somehow to hate each other, coldly and with an ironic polish. She knew what it was that had come between them. It was that fortune and the need of an heir. And now in the end Thérèse was becoming slowly an untidy, disgusting old Levantine woman helpless in the power of her obsession.

If she had not married Callendar she might have been a friend even now, not alone of Thérèse but of Callendar himself. But that would have been unbearable . . . much worse than this. At least in this there was a sense of finality.

So she tried as she had tried many times before, to pull those twelve years apart and pick from among the ruins the elements which had been the heart of her passion for him; but she found it impossible. She could not say why she would have returned to him now if he had asked her. Over all the years there hung a faint aura of evil (an evil which she told herself was not evil at all, but simply seemed so because she had been brought up to believe that sort of love was evil). It was desire which she felt, perhaps nothing more than that; yet it was, she was certain, not such a simple and uncomplicated thing. It was sinister, perhaps entangled in all her passion for *knowing* what people were, for taking them apart (she smiled to herself) to look at the works. No, this mystery was quite beyond her. . . .

So (she thought) in the end she had not been able to compete with Ellen Tolliver. He would have her now, as he had always wanted to have her. She (Sabine) had then not been so wrong

in the instinct that led her, years before, to call at the house in Rue Raynouard. There had been nothing to discover, and yet everything. What was true now of Callendar and Ellen Tolliver was true then, as they sat in the long beautiful drawing-room, just as true as it had been in the days when the girl had come to the house on Murray Hill. It was only that they themselves had changed and here (she thought almost with satisfaction) might lie the seeds of one more disaster. For Lilli Barr could not possibly be the same as the awkward, obscure Ellen Tolliver, and Callendar had hardened slowly in all the qualities which made him impossible. Ellen Tolliver would not submit to the unhappiness she herself had known; Ellen Tolliver would not wait patiently to achieve her own desire. She was capable of stormy scenes; she had clearly a genius for success, for having her own way. He had, perhaps, in all his watching never discovered this. And yet, as she thought it over and over on the drive to the Rue Tilsit, it occurred to her that it might be just this and nothing more that was the very core of that inexplicable, persistent attraction between them.

Lilli Barr . . . Lilli Barr . . . Lilli Barr . . . She kept repeating the name to herself. She still felt no resentment. If she herself could not have Callendar, there was no reason why Lilli Barr should not have him. There was, she knew, nothing more to be done.

The voice of Amedé, the driver, roused her as he opened the door. She stepped out, bade him wait for orders, and turning, she saw little Thérèse standing in the window with the governess. It reminded her that she must see Thérèse's friend Ella Nattatorini about the lease for the house at Houlgate. . . . The sea would do little Thérèse good. And there were servants to be engaged and the packing to be done . . .

The ocean of small things which made it possible to endure unhappiness rose and swept over her.

THE news of the wedding came to Sabine the following autumn while she was staying in Newport. Even the war had not crowded out of the journals an event of such interest. The bride, she read, was well known to the public as a pianist. She had described herself as Ellen Tolliver, American by birth, age thirty-four years. (It was the first time that the world knew Lilli Barr was American, for Rebecca and the forgotten Schneidermann had done their work well.) The bridegroom was prominent and the member of many clubs, the last of his family, and had not lived in America for more than ten years. He was a captain in the French army and would be stationed in Tunis where they were to spend the honeymoon.

Laying aside the *Times* and resuming her breakfast, she discovered that her only response to the news was one of shock at the haste with which the wedding had followed the divorce. It was almost as if they said that all these years she had stood between them, and now that Callendar was free, they must lose no time. Vaguely she felt that she should feel insulted. It was not until evening, when she drove over to dine with Mrs. Champion at The Cedars, that the sense of depression abated a little.

It was a gloomy place—the Cedars—built in the Seventies in the ornate style in favor at that time, and the presence of Mrs. Champion and the Virgins did nothing to raise the tone. Janey and Margaret (it seemed to her when she saw them in the dark cool rooms that she had known them always) were, as she calculated it, now forty-two and forty-five respectively and had reached the stage in which any spark that may have dwelt within their narrow-chested frames was now sublimated into an interest in garden clubs and work among the sailors. Things had changed . . . enormously, but Janey and Margaret had gone on and on, living in the gloomy Cedars with their mother, perpetually shocked and stimulated by the stories of the oil magnates and financial adventurers who had taken possession of the Casino. It was these

stories which provided the opening barrage of conversation at dinner.

"There is one woman who they say gives enormous parties," Janey told her at dinner, "who was once the cook for a cousin of Mrs. Mallinson."

They assured her, although she knew it well enough, that Newport was not the same. It had lost its tone; and in losing it (thought Sabine) it had left Mrs. Champion and the Virgins far behind. Bishop Smallwood, the Apostle to the Genteel, who came sometimes to spend a week with his "wa'am friend" Mrs. Champion, shared their disgust on Sabine's right and expressed properly outraged sentiments.

If America were anything, Sabine thought, over her guinea fowl, it was change . . . change . . . change. And God help those who didn't keep up with it! All the conversation gave her a curious sense of having passed poor Janey and Margaret and the Apostle and left them far behind. They seemed very far away. She felt that she was being kind to them in having come to dine at The Cedars. And once Mrs. Champion's word had been law in that tight little world which was now exploded, leaving them stranded, remote and helpless and pitiful, pretending all the while that it was *their* world, after all, which really counted.

She knew that they would find a bitter triumph in the news that had come with the morning *Times*, for they could not have forgotten how she stole Richard Callendar (by the lucky turn of events which they would never know) from under the noses of all of them. There had been so little excitement in their lives; certainly they had not forgotten, certainly they would not miss an opportunity for which they had waited so long. Yet they seemed so remote and negligible to her that she did not even wince when at last Mrs. Champion sidled up to the subject.

She was able to tell them and Bishop Smallwood, who in the decline of the season was fairly panting for gossip, that Lilli Barr was the same girl who had played at that scandalous party of Thérèse Callendar's. (Did they remember the naked Javanese

—or was it Senegalese—dancer? asked Mrs. Champion. She had commanded Janey and Margaret to shield their faces with their fans). Lilli Barr *was* the same girl with whom Richard Callendar had lunched so many times in the open window at Sherry's. She saw fit to pass over the implication, thrust in slyly by Mrs. Champion, that he was making the girl, after so many years, an honest woman. Because she herself did not really know.

And speaking of the divorce, she remarked brazenly, "It was all settled without difficulty. I knew that he was planning to marry her. We talked it over and thought it the best solution."

At which Mrs. Champion shook her head and made a clucking sound to indicate, as clearly as she dared, that the cold-blooded behavior of Sabine's generation in such matters was obscene and immoral. And the Apostle to the Genteel, in obeisance to his high church opinions and his disapproval of divorce, looked gravely and silently into the depths of his sherbet, but with an air of believing that there was much to be said on both sides. (It would not be wise to offend so rich and fashionable a woman as Sabine Callendar.) Janey and Margaret only stared at her, with the round, stupid eyes of little girls.

And when she left (a little after nine when she could endure the party no longer) Mrs. Champion was able at last to deliver the blow which she had held in reserve all the evening. As they stood in the porte cochère waiting for Sabine's motor to come up, she murmured under the protection of the darkness, "I could have warned you long ago, my dear. You should never have married Richard Callendar. If you had a mother—" She sighed and continued. "I should never have allowed Janey or Margaret to accept a proposal from him."

Such a speech would have made her angry once and have aroused the sharp tongue for which she had been famous; but it made no difference to her now, save that it amused her to think of Janey or Margaret standing there, a pair of Alices in Wonderland, as the wife of Richard. And she reflected that she possessed an experience which they would never know. It was better to have been

the wife of Callendar than to have dried up in the pale, shriveled fashion of Janey and Margaret (and they had been pretty once, in a silly, pink and white fashion). And she knew, with a curious pang of pity, that as they stood there in the shadow of their powerful mother, they too were thinking the same thing. They had never escaped that dowdy, stupid old woman. . . .

"Good night," she said. "I shan't see you again. I am sailing on Friday."

And then for the first time in her life, the wall of cold common sense collapsed and she exposed herself deliberately to the peril of boredom. "If you do decide to come to Paris, Janey, you must pay me a visit." For there was something unbearable to her in the thought of Janey, free for the first time from the dominion of her mother, alone in Paris. It would be like a bird set free which no longer knows how to fly. . . .

In the darkness Janey stammered and gushed like a girl of seventeen (Janey who would never see forty again), "It's kind of you, Sabine. It's wonderful. You see I've never been in Paris before without mother . . . and I wouldn't know just what to do . . . I'll come." And she subsided into a chaos of maidenly gurglings.

But as Sabine drove away from the barren shadows of the Cedars, she reproached herself for having succumbed so weakly. Something had happened to her. A year ago she would not have done such a stupid thing. . . . "Perhaps," she thought, above the distant roar of the surf, "I am growing old. . . ."

As the months passed and she returned to Paris—a Paris gay and gaudy with the excitement of the last days of the peace conference—she came to understand the satisfaction which lies of knowing that a thing is finished. She would no longer go through the torture of seeing Callendar day after day, always at hand and yet remote as the summit of a cold mountain peak. All that was over, finished; and in the sense of finality there was peace. Until now she had never known how terribly the monstrous house in

the Avenue du Bois had oppressed her. It was only since she had her own house in the Rue Tilsit, a house filled with all the exquisite things she cherished and which meant so much to her, that she understood completely the torture of the house which she had called "a sort of World's Fair exhibit."

For she had never, in all the years of their life together, been able to escape from it. Always Callendar had resisted silently, quietly in the way he had, until she had come in the end to accept the place without complaint. She had been silent in the hope that he might appreciate her silence and her virtue in submitting to his will. But he had simply taken it as a matter of course. She had never been able properly to entertain because the house was so awful that one could not even forget its shame in the hollow pretense that it was bizarre and consequently chic. And she knew now beyond all doubt that he liked the house. It satisfied him in the way it satisfied his mother. And she understood that he belonged in it just as Thérèse belonged there, more than ever since her Levantine blood had come into its own.

There in the Rue Tilsit, in her own house, among the things chosen by her own fastidious taste, she began once more to take up her own life, to descend from the unreal, extravagant level of the Callendars to a plane where she might exist in her proper relation to all about her. For more than twelve years, she came to realize, her life had not been her own, even for a moment. It had been Callendar's to do with as he chose. . . . She had been his possession. It was only now that she was beginning again to be free. . . .

In the beginning, after that day when she had said good-by so formally to Richard and his mother, when all the arrangements had been completed and Thérèse had stuffed all her papers back into her reticule, she could not bring herself to reënter the house, even to return for the possessions—pictures, bits of jade and silver and silk—which she had left behind her. It was only now, long afterward, when she had come to feel the full sense of her freedom that she considered going to fetch them.

At last, after she had been in Paris for weeks, she rang up the house and learning from Victorine that it was empty and that no one was expected (Thérèse was in London, Victorine told her, and Richard and Ellen still in Tunis) she arranged to call for the things late that afternoon.

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IT was a cold gray afternoon in the spring when the sun, breaking through the clouds, picked out for brief moments the faint green on the trees of the little park in the Avenue du Bois. Side by side the white houses stood, withdrawn a little from the street, flamboyant yet cold, ornate but barren. Sabine, watching them from the window of her tiny motor, was thankful again in a comfortable indefinite fashion that she had escaped from their insufferable pomp into the tiny, exquisite house in the Rue Tilsit.

Of late she had come at times to forget all the secret misery of the twelve years; she had been almost happy, as nearly happy as it was possible for her to be. It seemed to her now that circumstances had been cruel. She should have been born a man; and as a man, with a freedom from all the world of Mrs. Champion and her Virgins, she would have turned her mind to science. It was that sort of a mind; and it was only recently that she had come to believe it wasted . . . frittered away on tiny, nonsensical things, things which in the end only ate into her own chance for happiness. In all her life there had been nothing which had taken possession of her—nothing save the barren, futile passion for her husband. Her life, she reflected, had been a wasted one. As a man, she would have been free . . . free in the same fashion as Ellen Tolliver. She could have done as she liked, waiting upon no one. It seemed to her that her whole life had been spent in going from place to place, always in a tiny, expensive motor, arriving nowhere in the end. She was neither one thing nor the

other; she had fallen somewhere between the sterility of Janey and Margaret Champion and the fierce activity of Ellen Tolliver.

Ellen Tolliver had been free, without background, without friends, alone, an adventuress (not at all in the evil sense) but one who had gone unhindered toward the thing which possessed her. Perhaps Ellen Tolliver would succeed now where she had failed. None, thought Sabine, knew the perils which lay ahead so well as herself and the old curiosity began to assail her; she wanted passionately to see Ellen Tolliver, to find out from her in any fashion possible, scrupulous or otherwise, what had happened in those months since she said good-by to Callendar and Thérèse. Perhaps Ellen saw him more clearly than herself; perhaps she had discovered his secret . . . the nature of him. She had come to respect Ellen Tolliver.

The car halted. Amedé, neat and mustachioed, stood holding the door for her. With an effort of will she wrapped her fur cloak about her and stepped on to the pavement.

"Wait for me," she said. "I may want you to carry some things. I'll send Victorine when I want you."

The big ornate house had the look of a place closed and deserted; the shutters were up and the shades drawn save in the entresol. At the door, Victorine, who had been clearly watching for her, stood waiting with a gleam in her eye which Sabine, from long association, was able to read. It was a look with which Victorine triumphantly announced household calamities. As Sabine stepped into the great hall, the housekeeper put her finger to her mustachioed lips and murmured, "Madame Callendar is here. . . ." And then, with the air of turning the morsel about, she added, "The *young* Madame Callendar." And again, when her former mistress seemed not to be sufficiently shocked, she continued, "The *new* Mrs. Callendar."

For a moment Sabine stood hesitating, as if deciding whether to turn and run; it would have been an excellent excuse for never entering the house again. But far back in her consciousness, the old, insatiable curiosity gnawed and gnawed.

"Why has she returned?" she asked. "Where is Monsieur Callendar?"

Victorine shrugged her fat shoulders. "I don't know, Madame. None of us knows anything. A cable came at noon to-day with the news that she was arriving . . . to make things ready. I telephoned you. . . . I sent messages. The word came that you did not return for lunch and no one knew where you were." With an air of drama, she said again, "The new Madame Callendar came in an hour ago."

Sabine stood biting her crimson lips. If Ellen Tolliver had returned from Tunis, it was not likely that she would be going away soon, and it would be awkward to ask her permission to enter the house. Why had she returned? Why had Callendar not come with her? She turned to Victorine.

"Where is she now?"

"Resting," replied Victorine, "in the boudoir."

(That terrible room with the bearskin rugs and the mirrors sending back and forth innumerable reflections, as if the place were filled with a host of people . . . a host of personalities all of whom were in the end contained within the flesh of the onlooker. . . . Many persons in each of us, thought Sabine. It was comic to think of Ellen Tolliver, so distinguished, so self-possessed, so cold, in the midst of all that cheap demi-mondaine splendor.)

"Are my things ready?"

"I was not sure, Madame, how many things you wished to take away with you. I got ready the things I *knew*. There may be others."

Sabine made her decision. "I will come in and get them now. Say nothing to Madame Callendar. If she's resting, I'll hurry away without her knowing that I've come."

She slipped a ten franc note into the insinuating palm of Victorine who promptly said, "It's good to see you again, Madame," in a voice which carried another meaning—"We would much prefer you to the new Mrs. Callendar."

Sabine ignored her. "And Monsieur Callendar?" she asked again.

"He did not return, Madame. Nothing was said of him."

In the boudoir everhead Ellen lay, with her black dog by her side, staring resentfully at the reflections. She was unable to rest. Lying on the Egyptian chaise longue she surveyed the room and decided that she would have the indecent mirrors taken down to-morrow. She was certain that Sabine was not responsible for them; she suspected, out of the knowledge that had come to her in the past six months, that they were perhaps an idea of Callendar. They were unhealthy, she thought; all the house, for that matter, was unhealthy, even the hall and the glimpse of the darkened drawing room she had been able to snatch on her way up the marble stairs with the red plush rail. It was unhealthy to be stared at, accused day in and day out by these innumerable stupid reflections. It was, truly, an amazing house, and so like Thérèse. Why, she wondered, had Sabine not changed it? Sabine, with her faultless taste, her reserve, her ironic shell, must have hated it, always. Perhaps . . . perhaps she had not dared to oppose him. Perhaps he too, like his mother, had been fond of the house. Perhaps he had looked at Sabine (smiling with his mouth but not his eyes) and said, "We will let it rest for the present. Some day . . ." and so slipped away in that inexplicable, unconquerable fashion he had revealed in the villa at Tunis. Perhaps . . . She began to understand a little of what Sabine's life had been. Out of her own short, vivid experience, she was able to reconstruct bits of it, here and there. And Sabine had endured it for more than twelve years. . . .

The mirrors put her nerves on edge. She loathed the reflections staring back at her from every wall. They were like faces peering in at her . . . her own face repeated over and over again, tiresomely, for she was not vain and wasted no time over mirrors. No, she would have them down at once. If this was

to be her home, she would not be prevented by old Thérèse or Richard himself.

Her body ached from the fatigue of the journey from Marseilles yet it was impossible to rest. Her mind was awake, nervous, irritable, now angry, now frustrated, now cold and resolute, but always in its depths uncertain and muddled in a way it had never been before. Could it be that she was losing her grip upon life? That she was being swallowed up? Always she had known exactly what it was she wanted, what it was she would do. But now . . .

At length the restlessness became unbearable and, followed by the black dog, she rose and set out to explore the rest of the house. She went from room to room and returned at length to the stairway. The rooms, each one, were associated in some way with Thérèse, with Callendar, with Sabine. In her weariness and confusion, she could not drive them from her mind. They tormented her as she turned down the marble steps. She kept thinking of the night when Sabine had allowed Callendar and herself to drive home together from the house on Murray Hill. She understood now how wise Sabine had been, how subtle. She must have known then who it was that Callendar loved; she must have thought that in the end Callendar would never marry that struggling, gauche young girl who had fascinated him. Neither of them (she thought with satisfaction) had known the strength of that raw young girl. They had thought her, perhaps, stupid and unable to protect herself against such a rich and glamorous lover. . . .

Half down the stairs, in the very midst of these thoughts, she was interrupted by the sound of voices which came from the drawing-room. The shutters had been opened and the curtains flung back and in the twilight which filtered through she saw dimly two figures bending over a little pile of bric-à-brac. The one was Victorine. The other figure was familiar—she could not say in what way. Halting for a moment she watched them

and, as they became aware of her presence, the stranger turned toward her and she saw that it was Sabine, materialized, one might have said, out of her very thoughts.

She would have turned back, pretending she had seen nothing (perhaps Sabine would have hidden herself in a closet or behind a sofa, anywhere) but it was too late now. They had seen each other; they had stood for a time staring. It was impossible now to behave in any such idiotic fashion. Ellen smiled and, moving on down the stairs, was certain now of what she had suspected an hour earlier when the housekeeper greeted her—that old Victorine was devoted to the first Mrs. Callendar and looked upon herself as an intruder. Victorine, she fancied, had conspired to let Sabine into the house without announcing her.

Halting only to cuff Hansi and stop his growling, she crossed the great black and white squares of the tessellated hall and stepped into the drawing-room. She smiled and held out her hand.

"No one told me you had come in," she said. "It's pleasant to see you. . . . I arrived only an hour ago from Marseilles."

She found herself taking Sabine's hand. Their greeting was like one between two men, old friends—a symbol of the curious understanding which had existed between them since the very beginning. It seemed that they were neither friends, nor enemies, but something in between. They were always being thrown together, though neither would have said that she sought the company of the other.

Sabine laughed, with a disarming air of honesty. "I feel a fool," she said, and then explained how it was she had to come in. "I took a chance of being able to escape without your knowing it, but I am an unlucky gambler. I've never had any luck. I'm sorry." She laughed again and added, "I've no doubt (indicating Victorine) that she is enjoying it all immensely."

It was true. Victorine stood riveted to the floor, her eyes

bright with curiosity. Clearly she was confused and annoyed that they spoke English, which she could not understand.

"I'll go then," continued Sabine. "I shan't steal anything which doesn't belong to me."

At this Ellen laughed. "I've seen nothing in the house that you mightn't steal . . . gladly, for all of me."

"The boudoir . . ." murmured Sabine with understanding as she gathered up her parcels. She might have added, "Callendar and Thérèse think it a beautiful house. It suits them." But because she knew the remark would have a feline sound, she kept silent. Besides it was probable that Ellen already knew it, perfectly. She bade Victorine summon Amedé and when the housekeeper was gone, Ellen moved a little nearer and said in a low voice, "You mustn't go. You must stay for a little time. . . . Stay for a cup of tea."

But Sabine declined, protesting. "No. . . . I've a score of errands. I really must go . . . and honestly it seems to me an absurd situation."

Ellen laid one hand on her shoulder and, looking at her closely, repeated, "You *must* stay. . . . I must talk to some one. . . . There is so much to discuss."

Slowly Sabine put down her parcels, subdued once more by the old curiosity. (How could she resist the promise of such revelations?) Amedé appeared to carry away the larger bundles and she said to him, "Wait for me. I'm having tea with Mrs. Callendar."

And the eyes of Amedé grew as bright, as filled with curiosity as those of Victorine. In the hallway the housekeeper said to him with a grimace, "These Americans! What a cold blooded lot! The first wife and the second having tea in the husband's house!"

In the little sitting room where a year ago Thérèse had swept the papers from the table into her untidy reticule, Sabine and Ellen settled themselves to talk, Ellen looking worn and tired, as if a part of her tremendous spirit had been subdued or had

slipped away from her, Sabine refreshed, worldly, elegant, mistress of herself . . . the Sabine who had existed in the first days of the house on Murray Hill. The odd sense of comradeship persisted. It was the same spirit that had united them on the morning, long ago, when Sabine called at the Rue Raynouard, arriving as an enemy and departing as a friend. (She had been right in the instinct that led her into that call. Ellen belonged to him now, after all those years, as much of her as any mere process of law could deliver into his hands.)

It was Victorine who broke the precedent of fifteen years by bringing the tea with her own hands. Victorine, the house-keeper, the head of the entire ménage in the Avenue du Bois, bent her dignity, stepped down from her pedestal to carry a tea tray, because she feared that some morsel of fascinating interest might escape her ears. How could she resist this spectacle? This occasion? This friendly encounter ("Figure-toi," she would say in the servants' hall) between the two wives of her master. These Americans. . . .

But she strained her ears and summoned in vain a youthful uncertain memory of English, for neither of the wives said anything of importance while she was in the room. They discussed the lateness of the spring, and even the political conditions, as if there were nothing at all extraordinary in the situation. (The cabinet, said the new Mrs. Callendar, in which M. de Cyon had served, was gone to the wall and all his gentle intrigues come to nothing.)

When Victorine, having exhausted all the possibilities of delay by poking and fussing over the tea tray, was forced by decency to quit the room, Sabine rose and said, "I know the habits of Victorine. She is at this minute standing outside the door."

To prove it she walked quickly to the door and, flinging it open, saw Victorine sidle away with a pompous air of having many duties upon her mind.

"She has listened like that before . . . many times. It is her curiosity and one can't blame her for that. If I had been born

a servant I should have spent all my time at keyholes. All the same she should have been sent away long ago. One has only to shoo her off whenever there is anything important in the air."

It was her way of opening a discussion for which she hungered with a violence that made the curiosity of Victorine pale in comparison. But Ellen said nothing. She poured the tea and continued to talk of politics and the spring. It was not easy for her, who had never confided in any one. She sat behind the tea tray in the amazing, baroque room conscious that she was in the midst of a fantastic situation, yet unable to take one step in the direction she desired. She looked tall and handsome and dignified, but a little sad and weary. It was the sadness which conveyed to Sabine what was in the air.

"And Richard," she asked abruptly. "How is he?"

"I have left him," Ellen replied slowly, "for a time, at any rate."

She spoke with her eyes cast down, as if it shamed her to confess that she had not made of the marriage a complete success. She pretended to be busily engaged with the flame beneath the silver teakettle. "I do not know whether I shall go back. I am thinking it out . . . trying to decide."

Sabine, too wise to interrupt, lighted a cigarette, threw back her fur coat and waited.

"I have to decide, you see, between two things. . . . Between myself and him, you might say. Or better perhaps, whether I shall exist only in relation to him." She looked up suddenly, with an air of assurance which must have fascinated Sabine, who sat thinking of Ellen as she had been in the days of Murray Hill. "It is not only my music . . . my career. He hates that and he hates it because, in spite of anything he can do, I shall always be known to the world as Lilli Barr and not as Mrs. Callendar. I think he forgot to take that into consideration. He is very confident, very sure of himself."

Sabine still smiled faintly.

"I think you understand what it is I mean. I have been

married only six months but I realize that one of us must die . . . either Lilli Barr or Mrs. Callendar. I am trying to decide which it must be. It is hard because both of them are very much alive and neither of them is still in her first youth. That's what makes it difficult. I don't know whether it is worth while to kill Lilli Barr in order that Mrs. Callendar may live and (she made a wry face) be all that is to be expected of a lady in her position . . . the wife of Richard Callendar. I fancy you understand what I mean." She leaned forward and asked, "Will you have another cup? . . . No?"

She discussed the problem coldly, with an air of utter detachment; these two creatures—Lilli Barr and the second Mrs. Callendar—might have existed without any relation to herself. Sabine, understanding perhaps that it was only in such a fashion that she was able to discuss the affair at all, took her cue and said, "The first Mrs. Callendar is dead. She has been dying for some months, but she is dead, completely dead. And Sabine Cane is alive again, more alive than she has ever been . . . and free. My God! How free!"

For a time Ellen sat thoughtfully staring into the fire and when at length she spoke, it was to say, "Ah! I know what you mean by being free. I know perfectly. I can imagine what it must have been. . . . I've seen it myself."

And while she talked thus, calmly, with the one woman in the world who had every reason to hate her, a woman whom she had defeated but who still seemed in some outlandish fashion a friend and ally, she kept seeing the villa and the white-walled garden in Tunis. She kept seeing her husband (who had once been Sabine's husband) walking up and down in the cool of the evening, a few feet from her chair yet as remote as if he had been on the opposite side of the white desert beyond the walls. She saw him walking and smoking and ignoring her, his strong brown hands clasped behind him, absorbed always in some mystery which had nothing to do with her, and yet conscious (he must have been conscious) of a shadowy conflict that would neither

vanish nor be pinned down—a man who shut her out of his existence and yet treated her as a possession. She kept seeing the handsome face, the curved red lips, the finely arched nose, the dark mustaches and above all the cold, gray, unfathomable eyes. (If only once he had given way for a moment. If only once that inhuman aloofness had melted, not into a fierce, glowing passion, but into a touching, simple affection. . . .)

"I know what it is," she repeated slowly. "I wondered sometimes . . . in the long evenings, how you endured it. And I wondered too whether I should ever be able to endure it. You see, the difficulty is that I have no time now to experiment. I must decide. If I gave twelve years of my life, I should be . . ." She thought for a second. "I should be forty-seven. I dare not risk failure at that age. That would be unbearable because there would be nothing ahead." Again she was silent for a time and then murmured, "I wanted to talk with you. I should have come to you if we had not met here. . . . I could not have helped it. It was impossible to talk of him with any one who has not known him . . . who has not lived with him. Such a person could not understand what he was like. . . ."

Sabine sat on the edge of her gilt chair, hungrily, with the air of a woman whose most passionate desire was at last being satisfied. For years she had waited. Only once before—on the morning she called at the Rue Raynouard—had she even spoken of the thing. She had said on that occasion, "You know my husband . . . a little. So you can guess perhaps a little of the story." (It was a different Sabine who sat here saying, "My God! How free!")

The cigarette had burned until it scorched her gray gloves. "But it is different with you. He is in love with you. He never loved me. It was you that he loved always. I know that." And with a pained ironic smile, she added, "Sabine Cane dares say what Mrs. Callendar could not even think."

Outside the house the twilight had come down gently over the

trees in the little park. Beside Sabine's tiny motor, Amedé waited, smoking cigarette after cigarette. Belowstairs Victorine regaled the servants' hall with an embroidered description of what she had witnessed, but when pressed for details became vague and unsatisfactory.

Sabine stirred and murmured: "Besides, I don't fancy you are entirely . . . How shall I say it? I don't wish to be offensive . . . I don't fancy perhaps that you are completely in love with him. I mean that you have not lost your head. If you gave him up, it would not be the end of everything. . . ."

Ellen sat up very straight, her mouth almost hard. "No," she said. "It would not be the end of everything!" And then relaxing a bit, she continued, "No. But I am in love with him. I do love him. I can't describe it. . . . It's a kind of hypnotism."

It was impossible to be angry with Sabine. She was so calm, so obviously honest; it was impossible not to respect that incredible passion for the truth.

"I know what it is . . . I know," murmured Sabine thoughtfully.

"I think at times that I could give him up," and Ellen snapped her fingers, "like that . . . quickly, without a qualm, without so much as a backward look, and then something reaches out and takes possession of me, and in the next moment I know it is impossible. Once you are entangled, it is not easy to be free." She threw her cigarette half-smoked into the mouth of the fireplace, a monstrous, ornate affair out of all proportion to the room. "My God!" she added with a quick passion. "What is it that he does to us? . . . To women like you and me, who are intelligent women, independent . . . not fools? What is it he does to most women? I have seen them in the hotel at Tunis looking at him. I have seen that look come into his eyes. . . ."

Sabine put down her teacup, leaned forward and said, "It is an animal thing . . . what he does to us. If we are to be honest, it is that. You see, women like you and me never think of that. . . . We take it for granted there is no such thing. . . ."

But there is, just the same. It is in all of us who are women at all. The power he possesses is the power of most men multiplied many times. . . . Latin women, who are more honest, can deal with it. . . . French women . . . some French women . . . are cynical and rational. . . . And they are better protected than ourselves, because they know what they are about. . . . A woman like old Thérèse could never have been hurt by him. They are protected from suffering, at least a certain kind of suffering. They would not be caught as we have been . . . stupidly."

French women! (thought Ellen). There was Madame Nozières. Had it protected her? Still, her suffering had not been of this sort. It was a different thing. What Sabine said about women like themselves was true. Somehow Sabine had cleared the air. She (Ellen) had always thought of him thus in the moments when her head had been quite clear . . . as an animal, a handsome, docile cat. It explained too why she had always had a small, secret terror of him; why she had always been shocked by the fierceness of his love. When he had come to her in the Babylon Arms the distaste had not been so strong; but he had been more fresh then, less conscious of what he was. When he returned to her, it was with the freshness gone, with the romance worn away so that only the other thing showed through, naked yet fascinating to a woman who (she was honest with herself) . . . a woman who had never known anything but the timid, pitiful love of Clarence.

And there was one thing she could not endure—that she, Ellen Tolliver, the part of her which she had guarded so jealously, should ever be destroyed by losing control over her own body.

And again she kept seeing him, dark and secret, this time as he sat across from her at the table in the small white room overlooking the Mediterranean, with the old sense of conflict rising sharply between them. She was conscious of watching him, as he watched her, of wondering how long she could go on thus, imprisoned. She saw again the gray eyes watching her, stubbornly, as if she were a proud animal which they had set themselves to

subdue. It was all confused and hateful because one could never know what he was thinking—whether behind those opaque gray eyes there were thoughts of love or of hatred. There were no intimacies of feeling, or even of taste. He was not a husband such as Fergus would have been, eager and naïvely honest, not stolid and dependable like Robert. . . . He was not like any man she could think of. He was an alien . . . an outsider. She remembered the taunt Rebecca had flung at her, "He is marrying you only to break your will . . . to destroy you. He has waited all these years."

But he had not done it! He had not done it! There were times when she hated only and felt powerful and strong, but times too when her strength oozed from her, leaving her only a poor, silly, feminine creature eager to please and fascinate him—a contemptible creature like those women in the corridors of the hotel in Tunis. No, she would not be destroyed thus!

"Sometimes," observed Sabine, in her cold, measured voice, "I think that men and women are born to be enemies, that even in the happiest of loves there is an element of conflict. One must possess and the other be possessed. There is no helping it. It seems to me that we are always fighting, fighting, to save the part of us which is ourself."

She laughed. "Why, we're doing it now, you know . . . the two of us. Richard, you may say, is the embodiment of all that part of men which we can never bring ourselves to accept . . . women like you and me."

"We quarreled," continued Ellen absorbed in her own trouble. "We had terrible scenes and terrible reconciliations. I am certain that he has already been unfaithful. In the end I came away, but until I stepped on the ship I was not certain that I had the courage. . . . Imagine that! . . . Imagine me not having the courage simply to go from one place to another. I did not tell him I was going until the morning I sailed. There was time then for a quarrel, but not time for a reconciliation, and so I got off." She looked out of the window and continued in a

low voice. "And now . . . now I don't know what I'm to do. I came here to this house because I am still his wife. I wanted time to think it over . . . away from him. It would have been absurd to run away and hide like a schoolgirl."

"He will not change," observed Sabine. "I knew him for twelve years. He did not change." She flicked the ash from her cigarette and sighed. "Still, in all that time, we never quarreled. He would never have quarreled over my leaving him. . . . You see, he did not care enough."

It was quite dark now and the only light in the room came from the blaze in the huge fireplace. Sabine was drawing on her gloves. She gathered her fur cloak about her and set her small hat at exactly the right angle.

"Do you know the history of this house?" she asked. "It might interest you. You see, it was built originally by a German banker named Wolff to house his mistress. When he killed himself and she disappeared, it fell into the possession of the Callendars. Richard brought me here. . . . I followed the mistress in the possession of the boudoir . . . and now it is yours."

Ellen leaned back silently in her chair. There was something about this house which she had disliked since the moment she entered it . . . something lush and Oriental. So it had been built by a German Jew to please his mistress and after that it had sheltered first Sabine and then herself! The history seemed in some way to throw a light upon her own confusion. The house, it appeared, still carried on its traditions. She and Sabine were ladies. It was impossible to know what the mistress had been. She was dead or retired now, no doubt, in some respectable quarter of a provincial town, or perhaps become the proprietress of a café, or a bad variety actress. It was fascinating to speculate upon what had become of her. What would happen to Sabine? What would happen to herself?

Sabine interrupted her thoughts by saying, "It is ridiculous for me in my position to give you advice. Besides, even if matters

were different I'm not sure that I'd do it. Advice means nothing and people seldom take it because they never tell the whole truth. There is always something which they keep concealed, and because it is concealed it is the most important element of all and influences them far more than anything an outsider can say." She stood up and walked over to the fire. "No, there's nothing I can say save that it would be a pity for the world to lose Lilli Barr. She is far more important than Mrs. Callendar, and in the end I think would be the happier of the two."

Across the room Ellen watched the back of her visitor, speculating upon what she could have meant by the long speech. Was it possible that Sabine knew there was something she had not revealed? She grew suddenly jealous and suspicious. Had Sabine been too clever for her? Had all this strange feeling of an alliance between them been simply an illusion tricked up by a shrewd adversary? Did Sabine, standing there with her foot on the fender, fancy that if Callendar were free again she might have him back?

"You see, one of the complications," she said quietly, "is that I am going to have a baby."

At the announcement Sabine turned sharply, with a queer look in her eyes. Years before in this very room, she had made the identical speech to Callendar, and he had turned and kissed her with a new sort of tenderness. But the child had been a girl . . . a poor, sickly little girl. Sabine closed her eyes, and turning, rested her head for a moment against the high mantelpiece. She had the manner of one who had been hurt suddenly.

"It is the heir they wanted," she said sardonically.

"But it may be a girl."

She smiled again, bitterly, and said, "Oh, no! I am certain it will be a boy. You have a genius for success, my dear. You were never a bad gambler. I'm certain you will not fail old Thérèse."

At the door it was Victorine (who had been waiting in the

shadows) who opened for them. The two Mrs. Callendars said good-by.

"There is only one thing . . ." said Sabine. "I wonder whether he is really worth all this trouble and anxiety. When one thinks of the matter coldly, there is nothing to commend him. He has no virtues either as a husband or a lover. Sometimes I think him merely a stupid animal with immense powers of attraction."

"But none of that makes any difference," said Ellen. "That's the queer thing! It never does."

She watched Sabine until she saw her disappear into the tiny motor whose lights made two bright sparks in the spring darkness, and when she returned to the sitting room she knew suddenly that she had left Callendar for good. There was no longer any doubt about it. If she had not, in her heart, thought of him as a part of the past, she could not have talked as she did with Sabine. And Sabine had been right in knowing that there was something which she had concealed. It was this—that in the months spent in the Tunisian villa there had been moments when she fancied that her eyes were taking on the dumb, pleading look which had always been in the near-sighted eyes of Clarence. The memory came back to her now across all the years. He had beseeched her with his eyes for all that she could not give him, pled with her not to escape forever from his life. And what was his poor, pale love in comparison with this wild, devouring emotion that sometimes took possession of her? For Clarence was not dead yet; he still had the power of returning to her. The past, which she had tried always to forget, arose again and again. She even wondered sometimes what had become of poor, forlorn Mr. Wyck and those other figures, so dim now that they seemed to belong to some earlier life. She could see Clarence once more . . . his pale, tormented eyes, his dumb adoration. It seemed to her that it was this adoration, this abasement which had been the essence of his whole existence.

No, she could not face such a thing!

Hansi, lying by the fire, watched her with his gold eyes while she paced up and down in wild agitation.

It was intolerable, loathsome, impossible that she should ever become possessed . . . possessed as Clarence had once been. She had been free always and it was too late now to change.

She had dinner alone in the same room where she had talked with Sabine, and when she had finished she sent for Victorine and told her that she was leaving the house. If there were any messages (for she knew well enough that there would be, perhaps cable after cable) they could be forwarded to the Rue Raynouard where she would be with Madame de Cyon. She was returning now to Lily, as she had done so many times before.

A little before midnight she drove away for the last time from the house in the Avenue du Bois, having spent but ten hours of her life within its flamboyant walls. And by the time the taxicab arrived at Lily's quiet, unobtrusive door her nerves were in a state of panic. She was filled with a dim sense of fleeing from some invisible, nameless thing as she had fled when a child through the dark halls of the house in Sycamore Street.

Lily and Hattie were waiting her, though she had sent no word of her coming. They were not surprised. There had been a cable from Tunis addressed to her, which they had opened and read,

"Sail tomorrow. R. C."

After she had told them, abruptly and without explanation, that she had left Callendar forever, she locked herself in her room and looked at the cable again and again to make certain that she was not out of her senses. She had told him that she would stay at the house in the Avenue du Bois. How could he have known that she would escape so soon from that opulent, fleshly house to the refuge of Lily?

No, it was unbearable. One could not live with a man like that.

AS the weeks passed in the quiet of the big house in the Rue Raynouard, they did not annoy her. To Hattie, Ellen's mood—her sulkiness, her silence—had a familiarity that was comforting; Ellen had been silent and sulky as a girl, she had behaved thus throughout that last happy winter before she escaped forever in company with poor Clarence. Hattie, in the midst of caring for a big house which ran much better when left to itself, went about mothering Ellen, respecting her silences, happy that for a little time her daughter seemed to have some need of her.

And Lily . . . Lily was far too wise ever to pry into the affairs of any one. In time, she knew, everything became clear, everything would stand revealed. Besides there had been for her no element of surprise in the whole trouble. She had known men like Callendar; indeed, it was men like Callendar who had always been attracted to her (save only in the case of de Cyon with whom it was not a question of love). What puzzled her was the reason why a man like Callendar—a man capable of such intense passion, a man of such fascination and elusive masculinity—should ever have loved so persistently and in the end married a creature so independent, so fierce-willed as her cousin. One might as well have expected César to love Ellen; and César had hated her always with a passion which she returned. The whole affair had been wrong since the beginning . . . perverse and unnatural. Any one could have known that they would be unhappy. And in a quiet, gentle fashion Lily found satisfaction in the spectacle of a humbled, unhappy Ellen married to a man who was a match for her, perhaps more than a match—a man who stood aside and watched her coldly in the way she had watched people all her life. It was almost as if the first poor, pale husband, whom Lily had met so long ago on the crowded train bound for the Town, was by some turn of circumstances being avenged.

Callendar, she knew, had come to the house not once but sev-

eral times. He had talked with Ellen while they walked up and down the long garden beneath the mottled plane trees. She had watched them, secretly, wondering at the calm fashion in which they talked and at the inhuman hardness of Ellen. (She herself would have weakened and yielded long ago.) And each time he had gone away defeated, she knew, for the time being.

And then, slowly, bit by bit, the story came to her. She heard it even before Hattie heard it, how they had quarreled and how he had even gone so far as to strike her in a sudden gust of wild and unsuspected anger. She heard too of the women in the hotel at Tunis and of another woman, the wife of a French official living in a villa near them. Ellen had seen them walking together one night when she had stolen from the house to follow him.

"Think of it!" she cried to Lily. "I descended even to that . . . even to spying. Oh, he is a monster. You have no idea the sort of a man he is."

And yet (thought Lily) she loves him, or she would not feel so violently. And Lily *did* have an idea what sort of a man he was; she knew far more than Ellen imagined, for she was a woman of great experience, however discreet she may have been. That was perhaps the reason why every one bore their confidences to Lily first of all.

"And yet," continued Ellen as they sat late one night in the long drawing-room, "there are times when for a moment I can see how perfect a husband, how perfect a lover he could be, if he but chose to be. Once we could have been happy, for I was the stronger then and I know that I could have changed him. He is in love with me in a queer fashion. He has behaved like this with no other woman. . . . I am certain of it. . . . I could have changed him once, but it is too late now." And she, Ellen Tolliver, began to weep. "I am crying," she said, "because I have missed so much. I know that I shall never have another chance at happiness . . . of that sort."

She is crying (thought Lily) because she is a child who wants

everything in the world, a child who will never be satisfied.

"None of us," she said aloud, "has everything. No one life is long enough to encompass it all. We can only try to have as much as possible."

She might have added, "You have fame and wealth. Is not that enough?" But she kept silent because she knew that Ellen had taken account of these things and would, just then, have given them all in exchange for this other happiness. For Ellen could not bear the thought of having failed.

Lily was busy too in those days with her own affairs, for in the collapse of de Cyon's party she found it necessary to entertain, to go about, to meet new people, to make new friends. She gave dinner after dinner and invited Americans who might be of importance to her husband; and because she was a woman whose life existed only in relation to the men who surrounded her, she did it all gladly, though it ran against all the indolence of her nature. It would help de Cyon and it would be good too for Jean. Lily, who no longer put up bulwarks against age—Lily, who had allowed the gray to come into her tawny hair, was stepping aside to make way for others.

In her tactful fashion she managed somehow to coördinate all the coming and going in the big house. When Ellen told her about the baby, she insisted that it be born in her house.

"It is the center of the family now and it has been my home for so long that I seem always to have lived here. It will be no trouble to any one. We will move de Cyon's books out of the pavilion and turn it over to you. Jean used it for his own when he came home from school. De Cyon will not mind. He can have a room on the second floor."

Indeed the news of the child altered the life of the entire household until the preparations took on the proportions of a royal arrival. Callendar sent flowers daily (which Ellen could not be forever sending away) and she accepted them because the child was his too. This thought saddened her and made her

gentle with him when he came sometimes to call, respectfully, with a new tenderness of manner which she had never suspected. It might have weakened her will in the end and defeated her if she had not understood, as Sabine had done before her, that it was born in reality of his own vanity. He was being gentle with her now because she was the potential mother of *his* child, of *his* heir. At other times it maddened her to think that he should treat her gently and tenderly because there was the child to be considered. He had never thought of her at all. There had never been any real tenderness. She had suspicions too that it was only another way of attacking her will.

As for Hattie, the news appeared to change the whole tone and color of her life. Besides running the house she began to fuss and fidget over her Ellen. She recommended this and that; she was always advising her on the subject of prenatal influence. "You must remember," she said, "that I planned you should be a musician long before you were born. You can mold the whole life of the child."

She did not care whether the child was a girl or a boy. It was enough that she was to have a grandchild.

On the other side of the Atlantic, old Thérèse received only the calamitous news that there had been a separation. Instantly she had wound up her affairs, closed the house on Murray Hill and engaged a cabin. There was no time to be lost. Richard and Ellen must be reconciled at once. They must be brought together again. If this last chance failed, it would be the end of everything. There would be no more Callendars and no more men to care for the Callendar fortune and the ancient banking firm of Leopopulos et Cie. In an agony of uncertainty, the fat, bedizened, energetic old woman crossed the Atlantic and rushed by motor from Havre to Paris. In her heart, she had known all along that the marriage could not endure. She had played all her stakes on the chance that it would endure long enough to accomplish her purpose.

Still in ignorance of the prospects, she arrived in Paris late in the afternoon and went straight to the house in the Avenue du Bois where her son waited her in the small sitting room. Black and untidy, with her precious reticule swung over her fat arm, she closed the door behind her and faced him in a fury. She did not greet him. She did not even wait for him to speak.

"What is it you have done now? I know it is your fault. You have ruined everything." Her beady eyes glittered and she panted for breath as she flung herself down, thinking "After I work for years to accomplish this marriage."

He smiled at her. "I have done nothing," he said. "I do not know why she ran away."

But she knew he was lying. "You *do* know," she cried. "You *do* know. It is another woman. . . . Why can't you leave women alone? You," she mocked, "who thought yourself so wise, so clever with women, have ruined everything again." Her fury mounted and she began to shriek at him incoherently like a mad woman. "She will never divorce you as Sabine did. . . . Of what use are you to any one? Who would regret it if you died? You are worthless. . . . You are a waster . . . a devil." She beat her reticule with her fat bejeweled hands and gasped for breath. "I spend all my life caring for your fortune and you only waste it and run after women. . . . What sort of a man are you? You cannot even give me an heir. . . . There is a curse on you."

Callendar stood by the open window looking out, his back the picture of a cold and maddening indifference. It must have been clear to him that she cared more for her fortune than for her son. Her fortune . . . It was the one thing left her now, and what could she do with it? She could not take it into her grave. She could not even rest there knowing that it was being wasted and would in the end be broken up into small bits and distributed among obscure cousins she had never seen . . . the fortune which her family, the family of the green-eyed old banker of Pera, had built up over centuries. . . .

"Does all that mean nothing to you? Does nothing have any meaning for you?" she cried.

They were in open warfare now, the mother and the son, and after all that had been said nothing would ever again be the same between them. They stood there naked in combat, stripped of all pretense and intriguing.

Presently the old woman became more calm and in a low voice, that was strangely soft after all her harsh catalogue of accusations, murmured, as if speaking to herself, "I do not see how you can be the son of your father. . . . If I did not *know* . . . If I did not *know*, I could never believe it."

And then Callendar turned from the window and looked at her with an insolent smile.

"Where is Ellen?" she asked. "Where is she?"

"She is in the Rue Raynouard with Madame de Cyon. If you had waited," he spoke slowly now, with a tantalizing slowness. "If you had given me a moment or allowed me to speak, I should have told you. . . . Ellen is with child."

For a moment the old woman, gasping, peered at him in silence, and then she began to weep. It was the first time that any one had ever seen tears flow from those shrewd, glittering eyes. She took her reticule and pressed it against her breast as if it had been a child. "My little boy!" she said, through her tears. "My little boy . . . My Richard . . . Forgive me . . . Everything then is saved." Brightening, she continued, "And it will be a boy, *hein?* I have prayed, I have burned candles . . . I must go to Madame de Thèbes and find out for certain. I cannot wait. . . . I cannot wait. . . . She can tell everything by reading the crystal. I cannot wait."

Still clutching her reticule, she rose and, drying her tears on a dirty handkerchief of exquisite texture, she waddled to the door. As she opened it, the plump figure of Victorine vanished around a corner of the great hall. She had heard everything this time, for Thérèse and her son spoke French when they were together.

In the drawing-room at the Rue Raynouard, Ellen sat with her mother and Lily having tea when Thérèse was announced. To them she said, "If you don't mind, I'd best see her alone. . . . I don't know what it means. She has come perhaps to persuade me to return. She won't give up easily."

So Lily and Hattie left and a moment later at the foot of the stairs the figure of old Thérèse appeared, hot and untidy, peering with her eyes squinted, in search of her daughter-in-law. For a time Ellen waited in the cool shadows, watching. It was incredible (she thought) how Thérèse had changed. She was a figure of fun as she stood there, clutching her precious reticule, disheveled and bizarre, peering into the dim room. This was not the eccentric, worldly Thérèse of the house on Murray Hill. It was an old harridan, obsessed by a single idea—her fortune and what would become of it.

"Mrs. Callendar," she said softly, moving forward.

"Ah, there you are . . . My dear! My darling!" She waddled toward her daughter-in-law and embraced her.

(She has taken to oiling her hair, thought Ellen. She will be running a fruit stand soon.)

"I have heard the news. . . . I have heard the news. . . . You are to have a leetle baby."

She sat down, her fat old face all soft and beaming now, her diamonds glittering dimly as they had always glittered.

"Did Richard tell you?" asked Ellen.

"I only landed yesterday. . . . I motored all the way from Le Havre. I did not know the news then. I only knew that you had run away from him. What is it? What has happened?"

Ellen, watching her, knew that in the recesses of her Oriental mind the old woman thought her a fool for running away. Thérèse believed that any woman could make a good wife. It was a woman's duty to put up with anything, as Sabine had done until she was thrust aside as barren and useless. As Sabine

had said, Thérèse could have protected herself from a man like Callendar. She had been born old and wise, expecting nothing. She could not argue with Thérèse. The old woman would have thought her crazy.

"I have left him," she said. "I shall not go back."

"Perhaps the baby . . ." And Thérèse put her head on one side in a queer foreign fashion and smirked. "Perhaps the baby will change things." Then she leaned forward and patted Ellen's hand. "Never mind, we won't speak of it now, my darling. . . . It would disturb you . . . in your condition." She kept returning again and again to the idea of the baby.

Then, settling back in her chair, she took a biscuit from the reticule and began to nibble it. "We need not worry now," she continued. "To think of it . . . a baby . . . a grandson."

Ellen could not resist the perverse temptation. It was this old woman who, after all, had forced the marriage. She said, "Perhaps it will be a granddaughter."

But Thérèse was confident. "No, I have said prayers. I have burned candles. I have done everything. . . . I have paid an astrologer . . . I have overlooked nothing. I am sure it will be a grandson. It is all arranged. You have made me happy, my child. I must arrange to reward you."

(So Ellen had made two women fantastically happy . . . her own mother and old Thérèse.)

"I will make a settlement on you. I will give you a present . . . a magnificent present." And she began to finger her reticule again as if she might draw from it a bag of great gold pieces. "I will send to-morrow for a lawyer. We will arrange it."

And then, like Hattie, she began to offer piece after piece of advice, bits of good sense and weird snatches of ancient, tribal superstition. Ellen must do thus and so to make certain the child was a boy. She must eat this and that. And she must have the proper doctors . . . the very best. They must take no

risks. "I will pay for everything. . . ." she repeated. "You can charge it all to me. What is a little money to Thérèse Callendar?"

And at last she left, still excited and chattering. At the foot of the stairs, she turned, "I am going now to Madame de Thèbes to find out if it will be a boy. . . . But I am certain . . . I am sure." And she waddled up the long stairs and climbed again into the motor which drove her away on a round of fortune tellers.

The next morning she returned bringing her lawyer and with Ellen they sat for an hour in de Cyon's study arranging the settlement. It was shrewdly managed. Thérèse made a fine gift, but with many strings to it. Ellen was not to be allowed to touch the principal. The income would be hers whether the child was a boy or a girl. If it was a boy the principal would go to him on the death of his mother; if a girl it would return to the estate. The money, whatever became of it, was never to escape from the Callendar-Leopopulos fortune; but the income was large enough to support Ellen in comfort for the rest of her life. She accepted it because it made her position impregnable; it protected her, it gave her possession over the boy (for she too was certain it would be a boy) to do with as she saw fit. And she need never again know the old terror of being poor.

It was not until two days later, when she examined the settlement carefully, that she discovered a part of it was in real estate and included the flamboyant Babylon Arms, fallen now upon evil days, grown shabby and no longer respectable. The house where poor Clarence had lived until he destroyed himself was to be the property of her child . . . a child whose father was Richard Callendar.

Slowly the whole life in the big house came to revolve about Ellen and the coming child. June passed and July. The gentle de Cyon was moved with all his books and files and papers from

the pavilion into a room on the second floor. (No man save one with the resistance of old Gramp had any chance in this household of women.) Thérèse, untidy, her eyes brighter and brighter with the reassurance given her by Madame de Thèbes and a dozen other soothsayers, came daily and bore Ellen away to a variety of doctors. Callendar came sometimes on calls which grew more and more formal as time passed; and Sabine called and sent baskets of fruit. Musicians, actresses, composers passed in and out. Through it all, Hattie moved in her triumphant way, older now but scarcely less subdued than she had been in the days when she sat darning, surrounded by her family in the shabby sitting room on Sycamore street. In Hattie there were elements of the eternal which took no account of changes in the life about her. It is possible that nothing in the whole spectacle seemed in the least strange to her. She appeared to accept its absurdity as a matter of course . . . the presence of Lily's French husband, of Jean who had had no father, the glittering dinners given in the Louis Quinze dining room which she never attended, the comings and goings of the untidy old woman who ate biscuits out of a handbag, the visits of the fastidious and fashionable Sabine, and even the occasional calls of Callendar himself, a man whom she regarded as a sinister and immoral creature, who would have ruined the life of any one of less character than a child of hers. She was busy. She had no time for memories. She had no longer to invent tasks for herself, and so she was happy. She was caught up again in the wild scurry and confusion of life.

Only Lily and old Gramp took the affair with calmness, the one gently with the air of knowing that in all the confusion some one must keep her head and smooth out all the little difficulties which arose from so strange a mélange of characters, the old man with an indifference which placed small value upon the arrival of one more child in a world already too well filled, a world in which there could no longer be any solitude save in one's own soul. He came and went as he chose through the garden gate opening into

the Rue de Passy, encountering on his way now Sabine, now old Thérèse, now de Cyon, now a doctor or two, all of whom regarded him with the air of looking upon a specter. It was impossible to believe that so old a man could still be alive. He passed them all without so much as a glance, absorbed always in his search for the youth which had escaped him forever. In him too there were elements of the eternal, which nothing could alter or change in any way. To Gramp, Sycamore Street and the Rue Raynouard were in the end the same.

And then one morning a taxicab appeared at the door and discharged into the midst of the confusion a triumphant Rebecca Schönberg, bustling and with a new light in her ferrety eyes, her mind full of schemes for fresh triumphs and new concert tours; for the news of the débâcle had come to her through the gentle and forgotten Schneidermann in Vienna where she had gone to visit Uncle Otto and Aunt Lina. Already, before even she had seen Ellen, she had started under way news of the return of Lilli Barr to the concert stage. (She knew well enough that Ellen would never return to Callendar. She knew that in the end he had defeated himself. He had hung himself with his own rope; but he had done it so much sooner than she expected.)

She bribed Augustine to let her know when Callendar came to the house, and when he arrived she took care that he did not escape without seeing her. She met him at the foot of the stairs. She did not flaunt her triumph; she was far too subtle for that. The same blood flowed in her veins and she understood how best to mock him.

She said, "Ah! It's you. I hadn't expected to see *you* here." And holding out her hand with the air of a mourner, she murmured with sad looks and a bogus sincerity, "I'm *so* sorry it turned out badly. I had hoped you would be successful this time. I wanted you to know that I am full of sympathy. . . . But, of course, Ellen could not have done otherwise."

And so she left him nothing to say. She sent him away, bedraggled and a little ridiculous, in defeat; for by the light in

her eye he could not fail to see that she was jeering him. He had not subdued Lilli Barr. She belonged once more to Rebecca and to the world. And in the end it was women who defeated him—women who had always been his obsession, the women who surrounded Ellen—Lily and Hattie and Rebecca, the subtle Sabine and even Thérèse with her gift that made Ellen unpregnably secure. He had not broken her spirit, for he had never possessed her even for a moment; it was her awareness which had baffled him, standing like a wall across his path.

The perverse experiment had failed; there had not even been much pleasure in it. Youth lay behind him. What lay ahead? As he stepped from Lily's door there were lines in the handsome, insolent face which no amount of exercise or massage could ever smooth away. . . . He was growing old. It was as if these women had banded together and, placing Ellen in their midst, now mocked him. . . . Women . . . Women . . . Women . . . One could come to hate them all in the end.

So Rebecca too, in the wholly false supposition that she had come for a brief visit, was given a room that opened off the gallery and so joined all the colony which centered about Ellen in a world founded upon dividends from the black Mills in the Midlands.

And Ellen waited, growing more and more calm as her time approached. She found pleasure in the fantastic spectacle of Lily's house. She was the center of it, and the old intoxication, so familiar to Lilli Barr, began slowly to claim her again.

THE thing happened on a hot breathless night in September when the shimmer of heat dying away with the fall of evening left the garden cool and dark save for the light that streamed from the windows of the long drawing room and from a single window of the white pavilion. The Eng-

lish nurse was there, waiting, and the doctor had come and gone to return in a little while. Everything went well, save that the patient (so the nurse explained to Hattie and Thérèse) was not accepting the ordeal in the proper mood. She had insisted upon playing bridge, when she should have been walking up and down, up and down, to hasten the birth of the child. She sat now in the drawing-room at a table with Lily, Jean and Rebecca, angry at not being allowed to smoke, desperate that she had no control over what was happening to her. She sat, holding her cards stiffly before her, clad in a peignoir of coral silk, her black hair drawn tightly back as she had worn it at her concerts.

"Two spades," she said, and glared at Rebecca when the latter doubled. There was a dew of perspiration on her high smooth forehead and she bit her lips from time to time. She was magnificent and dominating (thought Lily). Really it was an amazing kind of fierce beauty.

In one corner de Cyon, ousted from the pavilion, sat reading his foreign newspapers—the threads which kept him in touch with the world of foreign politics. They lay spread out before him . . . *Le Journal de Genève*, *Il Seccolo* of Milan, *La Tribuna* of Rome, the *London Post*, the *London Times*, the *New York Times*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Echo de Paris*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Matin*, *L'Œuvre* . . . in a neat pile, from which he lifted them calmly in turn, to read them through and clip now here, now there, with the long silver scissors a bit of news, a king's remarks, a prime minister's speech or the leader of some Socialist editor. Enconced behind the gilt table, he appeared cool and aloof, with his white hair and his pink face. What was going on almost at his side had no interest for him. His first wife had been barren and his second he had married too late. He clipped and clipped, the lean scissors snipping their way through words in Italian, Spanish, German, French and English. Snip . . . snip . . . snip . . . they ran. . . .

A dozen feet from him and well away from the bridge table

where at the command of Ellen the others played in a disheartened fashion, Hattie and Thérèse sat side by side, the one knitting energetically at a blue and white carriage robe, the other nibbling at a biscuit. They both waited . . . they both fidgeted, not daring to risk an explosion from Ellen. She was not to be crossed at this moment.

"When Richard was born," Thérèse was saying . . . "I suffered for twenty-six hours . . . but they do things better nowadays."

And then Hattie, in a low voice lest she disturb the bridge players, "I'm not sure that nature's way isn't the best. I don't believe in hurrying things." And then in the hot silence, the click, click, click of her knitting needles.

"She ought to be walking up and down," said Thérèse anxiously. "Do you think we ought to speak to her?"

"It will do no good. . . . In a moment she won't be able to sit there playing bridge. She'll have to walk up and down. . . . I remember when my last child was born, the doctor said . . ."

And so they went on, turning over and over again incidents appropriate to the occasion, two prospective grandmothers, each of them passionately interested in what lay ahead. Thérèse, despite her swarthy skin, looked pale, and her fat hand trembled as she nibbled the biscuit. . . . Hattie only knit more and more furiously, raising her head from time to time to glance at her daughter who sat like a Spartan playing with Jean as a partner and winning steadily from Lily and Rebecca.

Snip! Snip! Snip! ran the silver scissors. Click! Click! Click! the knitting needles. Hattie halted for a moment to wipe her red, hot face. And then the cool, desperate voice of Ellen again, saying, "Five tricks and thirty-six in honors."

"It's our rubber," said Jean, white and nervous with the strain. And in his blue eyes the old light of admiration appeared. Ellen had always been like this even in the days when she had taken him, a little boy, to the Bois.

It was ten o'clock when Ellen at last pushed back her chair

and rose as the doctor entered the room. "I will walk for a time," she said and went with him out on to the terrace.

In their corner Hattie and old Thérèse grew silent and fell simply to watching for the figures of Ellen, in the coral peignoir, the doctor and the black dog, to pass and repass the tall windows. Jean smoked and quarreled in a low voice with Rebecca, and Lily going over to the side of de Cyon sat down and fell to reading the lace-like remnants of the newspapers that her husband tossed aside with the regularity of a machine. Presently, Augustine, her peasant's face beaming with the significance of the occasion, brought champagne which all save Hattie, who refused it sternly, drank against the heat.

The sounds in the distant street began to die away and the echo of the boat whistles on the Seine grew fainter and fainter. On the terrace Ellen and the doctor were joined by a second nurse, still in her cape, who had come in by the garden side.

And at half-past ten Callendar appeared at the foot of the long stairs, looking worn and old, but cool despite all the heat. At his entrance Hattie ignored him, Thérèse nodded, and the others, save de Cyon who did not notice him at all, bowed without any trace of warmth. He was an enemy; it was clear that they looked upon him thus, even old Thérèse whose only interest lay now in the child. He seated himself and fell to talking with Lily, who could not for long be disagreeable to any man, and presently Ellen appeared in one of the windows and said, "Rebecca, you and Jean play the piano . . . I can't bear to look at you all sitting like statues." And then she beckoned to Callendar who rose and went over to her.

As he left the room, Rebecca watched him with a queer expression of apprehension in her eyes. She did not trust him. He might turn the circumstances to his own advantage. He might cast a spell over Ellen at the moment when she was least able to resist. With Jean she went reluctantly to the piano where they fell to playing with four hands and with a mathematical precision they had long since perfected a variety of music hall songs. And

as she played she stole a glance now and then over her shoulders at the tall windows past which Ellen and Callendar moved with a clock-like regularity. But she was not the only one who watched. There was Hattie too and even old Thérèse. Each of them desired from Ellen a different thing, and each of them was resolved to have her own will in the matter.

Outside the windows the husband and the wife with the black dog at their heels walked up and down while Ellen, looking tall and pale and desperate, talked earnestly.

"The child," she said firmly, "is to be mine. I will fight until the end for that. I have made up my mind. I will not have him go to you. . . . You are not fit."

He said nothing in reply. It was not possible to argue at such a time. She was fighting now, as he had always done, unscrupulously, to achieve what she desired. They turned at the end of the terrace and moved back once more past the windows where Rebecca and Hattie and Thérèse kept peering out. It was (thought Ellen in a peaceful moment) like bearing one's child in public . . . as the French Queens had done, with a whole crowd looking on. . . . (But she must bring her mind back to the business at hand.)

"And if anything happens to me," she said to Callendar, "if I should die and the child live . . . he is to be brought up by my mother. I have talked to my lawyers. It is possible to arrange all that. There is plenty of evidence against you . . . even a French court—" She gasped for breath and turned again. "Even a French court would uphold me in that. Besides Rebecca has promised me that she will carry on the fight. I tell you all this, because I want you to know that I am finished forever." She was walking rapidly now and made a sudden passionate gesture in the direction of the windows. "Rebecca need not look at us so anxiously. There is no question about it. . . . And I will not leave a child of mine in such an atmosphere as you and your mother are able to provide." She drew another quick, sharp

breath and added, "I gave you every chance . . . and you were a rotter always. I loved you and I would love you still if I thought there was any chance of redemption . . . but there is none."

And then, before turning toward the pavilion, she said, "You did not win in the end, you see. . . . It was I who won . . . I and Sabine too. . . . And I will go on fighting, even if I should die. It has all been arranged. And now," she said, dismissing him, "will you tell my mother to come with me to the pavilion? I want none of the others . . . only her."

So it was Callendar who summoned Hattie at the moment Ellen needed her most. In the end she belonged to Hattie alone of all those people who sat waiting . . . Hattie, whose whole life had been concerned with love and birth and death.

When they had gone away, Callendar sat on the stone balustrade smoking in silence, conquered now beyond all doubt. He had been dismissed once and for all. Ellen would return now into the world out of which she had come to him . . . a world in which she belonged to Rebecca and her public. Perhaps as he sat there in the hot, still air, waiting for his child to be born, he knew the last of his adventures to which there was any savor had come to an end.

Through the windows he saw de Cyon rise presently and go up the long stairs. He saw Lily (a fascinating woman, he thought, who must have been very beautiful in her youth) talking to his mother who still nibbled at her biscuit. Jean and Rebecca had ceased their music and sat now playing double patience with a fierce, unnatural absorption.

Augustine came in presently with a message. Mrs. Cane Callendar (Sabine) would like to know if there was any news. She went away again with the message Lily gave her: Everything was going well, but there was no news yet.

They were all waiting, waiting, waiting. . . .

Callendar held tight the heavy collar of Hansi, who squirmed

and moaned pitifully because he could not follow his mistress.

Rebecca found him there when at last she tired of her game and wandered out into the garden to smoke. She passed him without speaking and as he looked after her, he saw that she had taken to walking round and round the white pavilion as if she had set herself to guard it from him.

Presently he returned to the drawing-room and opening another bottle of champagne, sat silently by the side of Lily, who alone behaved with any kindness toward him. Old Thérèse watched him, desperately, as the time drew nearer and nearer. She was pale now with terror lest Madame de Thèbes had been wrong. If the child were a girl it would be the end of everything. . . . She had even stopped nibbling her biscuits. The reticule had fallen to the floor. Her fat body rested on the edge of her chair . . . tense and strained in her passionate anxiety.

The whole room, the whole house, the whole garden stood breathless in the heat with the terrible stillness that surrounded the waiting. . . .

Somewhere in the direction of the Trocadéro a clock struck midnight, booming faintly, each stroke hanging on the hot still air to confuse the stroke which followed. The sound swam in the big room. Callendar rose and went again into the garden, into a distant corner well away from Rebecca whose progress round and round the pavilion was marked by the tiny glow at the end of her cigarette.

Thérèse, unable to bear the silence any longer, rose too and went out onto the terrace to watch the light in the pavilion. A breeze came up and the leaves of the plane trees fell to rustling. Lily and Jean talked together quietly in the corner by de Cyon's desk. From the window on the second floor which opened into Gramp's room there was a light still burning. Rebecca, looking up at it from her vigil, saw the figure of the old man show black and thin against the glow, as he leaned out and peered over the garden.

An hour passed and the distant clock struck one. A bell sounded faintly in the house and Augustine appeared. It was Mrs. Cane Callendar once more. Was there any news?

"She must have a violent curiosity," thought Lily, "to be staying up all night."

Thérèse, in the black shadow of the house, began to pray, as if it were still not too late for a miracle. She had never been religious, but like Voltaire she believed in trying everything. . . . After she had prayed for a time she grew hungry, took another biscuit from the reticule and went into the drawing-room for a glass of champagne. So it happened that before she was able to return to her watching and praying the door of the pavilion opened and the tiny lights that in the darkness marked the positions of Callendar and Rebecca moved hastily in its direction.

In the doorway stood Hattie, larger than either of them, red-faced, triumphant and with a wild light in her eyes. As first Rebecca and then Callendar emerged from the shadows, she said, "It is all over. . . . Everything is fine. . . . It is a boy!"

The news was borne by Rebecca into the drawing-room where Thérèse in her excitement put down her glass of champagne into sheer space instead of on the table, leaving it to break and spill its contents over the Aubusson carpet. On short fat legs she waddled through the window to the pavilion where Hattie, who had in the excitement of the moment forgotten her hatred, was delivering to Callendar a detailed and vivid account of the accouchement.

Thérèse forgot even her English. "Eet ees a boy," she squealed. "Eet ees a boy. God is good. He has answered my prayers . . . and what is it he weighs?"

"Seven pounds," replied Hattie. "A fine baby, though none of my children weighed less than ten."

A kind of hysteria swept them all. The waiting was over. Thérèse had an heir, Hattie had a grandchild and Callendar, at last, a son whom he would perhaps never possess as his own.

From a window above their heads, the sound of a cracked shrill voice shot at them.

"Is the child born? What is it?" . . . And then with irritation. "For Heaven's sake!"

It was Gramp. Lily answered him, and the bony head was withdrawn again, the light extinguished and the room left to silence.

They must all see the child. They must come to the very door of the pavilion where Hattie, holding them at bay like a royal nurse exhibiting the heir to the populace, thrust toward them a lusty, tomato-colored child which appeared to cry, "Ala-as! Ala-as! Ala-as!" over and over again, monotonously. She allowed no one to touch it, not even old Thérèse who, kept at bay by the threatening manner of the royal nurse, bent over it murmuring, "The darling! Isn't he beautiful? The precious darling! *Qu'il est mignon!* And he looks for all the world like Richard, the precious darling."

"You can't tell what he looks like," said Hattie with a savage indignation. "That's nonsense! You can't tell for a long time!"

Callendar, thrust aside by this regiment of women, regarded his son with a faint light in his gray eyes. He said nothing. He waited. Perhaps for an instant he wished that he might see Ellen, as a father, a husband should have done. But he was given no chance, for Hattie said, "She wants to see Lily. The doctor says she may see no one else."

Ensnared in the pavilion Hattie became a despot, a tyrant. The child at the moment it entered the world became a part of her family, swallowed up by it remorselessly.

Inside the pavilion, a pale, handsome Ellen looked up at Lily and murmured, smiling a little, "You must call Sabine. Tell her that she was right. Just tell I am a good gambler. I have been successful. Old Thérèse is satisfied."

One by one they drifted away until only Callendar was left sitting in the darkness, smoking and thinking. A little way off

in the shadow where she could not be seen Rebecca waited too, watching him; and when at length he rose and went out of the gate into the Rue de Passy, she followed and stood looking after him as he climbed the slope and disappeared around a corner beneath the glare of a street lamp. He seemed not so tall and not so formidable as he had once been. The fine shoulders sagged a little; and Rebecca, looking after him, knew whither he was bound. For she had taken the trouble to find out. She had herself hunted down his infidelity. Ellen, she knew, would never forgive him and she (Rebecca) had the proof. It was the seal upon his defeat.

And as she stood there she looked not down the Rue de Passy but down the corridor of the years, and at the end she saw a defeated and bitter sensualist buying with money what had once come to him through beauty and charm and the glow of youth.

She closed the gate and turned back into the garden. The dawn had begun to filter in through the trees and to turn the pavilion from gray to white. To-morrow she must begin to work on the plans for Ellen's return. It must be triumphant, spectacular, worthy of such an artist as Lilli Barr. For Ellen belonged again to Rebecca Schönberg.

ON a night, five months after the breathless waiting in the garden of the house in the Rue Raynouard, Lilli Barr, under the management of the energetic and now happy Rebecca, returned in triumph. She played with the Padeloup Orchestra in the Theatre Champs-Élysées, a new concerto written by one of the young composers who came so often to disturb the quiet of Lily's house. From the great spaces of the dim theatre they saw her enter, making her way slowly and with a great dignity through the players of the orchestra; and as she passed them, one by one the musicians appeared to draw from her a queer inex-

plicable fire, a new, strange vitality. She was dressed as she had been on that first night in New York—in crimson velvet and diamonds with her black hair drawn back tightly from the pale, handsome face.

At sight of her, a faint hush fell upon the audience and then the slow, subdued murmur of admiration. The white faces, row upon row, extended far back into the dim reaches of the theatre until at length they became blurred and misty, indistinguishable. It was all more than she had imagined in the days when she had played savagely and sullenly in the shabby room on Sycamore Street.

The conductor rose, a black slim figure against the lights of the orchestra. He raised his baton and Lilli Barr touched the first chords of the barbaric concerto. There was no doubt any longer. She reached out in some mysterious fashion and took possession of the great audience. She was more magnificent than she had ever been, for in this performance there was no longer any trickery. It was the music of a great artist.

The orchestra swept into a great crescendo, triumphant, overwhelming, above which the sound of the piano rose clear and crystalline. . . .

Afterward in the big reception room lined with the mirrors used by the dancers of the ballet before a performance, she waited to receive all those who came to welcome her back into their world. There were actresses and millionaires, demi-mondaines and composers, musicians and painters, the Duc de Guermantes and M. de Charlus, patrons of art and adventuresses who came and went under the brilliant, triumphant glitter of Rebecca's ferrety eyes. And last of all there was Thérèse, untidy and covered with diamonds, and her friend, Ella Nattatorini, and Sabine who had in tow Janey Champion whom, as one of the Virgins, Ellen had seen so long ago through the crevice of the lacquered screen in the Callendar drawing-room. Janey was breathless and excited

now, her hair all in disarray; for Sabine had kept her promise and Janey, for the first time in all her forty-six barren years, had escaped and was seeing life.

Ellen received them all with something of the old savor of triumph, but it was not the same. As Gramp had known, she had passed the peak of all her existence. All this array, this chatter, this confusion had begun a little to bore her.

And when they had gone she sat down to wait for Lily who had gone to the Gare de Lyon to speed a party consisting of Hattie and Old Gramp and the baby, Augustine and a gigantic Breton wet nurse with the preposterous name of Frédegonde, on their journey to the white villa in Nice where Lily had gone so many times while César was alive. For Lily, who had always followed the sun, no longer had any use for the white villa. Her place now was in damp and chilly Paris by the side of her husband.

Wrapped in her sable cloak, Ellen leaned back in her chair and closing her eyes, lost herself in this new and comfortable peace which had enveloped her since that hot terrible night in the pavilion. It seemed to her that she had never really rested before in all her life. It was over and finished. She had begun to forget a little what Callendar had been, to remember only what she desired to remember. She thought of him as dead; and it is true that the Callendar who came to her in the Babylon Arms had died long ago. She had done her duty, the one thing that she could have done, the one thing that had remained. She had borne a child and delivered it to Hattie for her own, to possess until she died or the child grew up and escaped from her. But by that time, Hattie would be so old that it would not greatly matter. She would be willing to sit by the fire in the long drawing-room as old Madame Gigon had done. And presently she rose and throwing off her cloak seated herself at the big piano in the corner of the room. She began to play softly, marvelously, and the wild savage fire which had persisted through everything began once more to shine in her

yes. The Town, the black Mills, the Callendars, poor Clarence and the green-eyed Mr. Wyck . . . all these were forgotten. She was freed at last of all those old bonds, possessed now only by the beauty of the sounds she made. But, on the high pinnacle she had built with her own hands, she was alone . . . the woman whom Fergus had seen for a moment in a queer flash of clairvoyance on the night of his death.

She was playing thus when Lily came in quietly to stand listening in the shadows. . . .

The white villa, as old Madame Gigon had said, was not in Nice proper but in Cimiez, high on the slope overlooking Villefranche and the Bay of Angels. To approach it one was forced to descend from the carriage and climb past the statue of Queen Victoria, carved in the manner of Thorvaldsen with an umbrella in one hand and a reticule in the other—a reticule which Gramp believed was the one (embroidered with a poodle-dog in gold thread) which she had carried on the visit that was designed to make Eugénie respectable in the eyes of royal Europe. Beyond the Queen, there was a little flight of steps leading to a gateway covered with bougainvillea and shaded by an ancient tree of mimosa.

It was up this exotic path that the little procession made its way two days after Lily bade it farewell in the Gare de Lyon. Jean went ahead and after him Hattie, with her grandson in her arms, followed closely by The Everlasting, the gigantic, abundant Frédegonde and her child. At the approach of evening they were settled and under the mimosa tree Hattie sat by the side of little Fergus, triumphant and content, singing him to sleep as she had once done with her own Fergus. Nothing had changed. for in Hattie there was a quality of the eternal concerned only with love and birth and death.

While she sang thus in a low voice, The Everlasting, with a great book under his arm, appeared in the doorway and moved toward her. By the side of the baby he halted for a moment,

adjusted his spectacles and peered closely. He said nothing and presently his thin old lips expanded into a grin—a grin which said, “You’ve a lot of trouble before you, but what a good time you will have!” It was a grin, strange to say, of envy.

And as he stood there, he saw dimly the figure of a fat, untidy, bedizened old woman making her way painfully up the slope past the statue of Queen Victoria. It was Thérèse, who had altered the whole course of her journey to Trieste in order to see this precious, incomparable grandchild. Silently, lest she rouse the infant, she took her place by the side of the cradle. But little Fergus showed no signs of falling asleep. He was a fine baby. He lay looking up at them with the inscrutable gray eyes which had come from Callendar. But he had a fine pretty nose, that showed every sign of developing those handsome curves which gave Ellen and, before her, Old Julia Shane a proud look of domination. Presently in the hope of diverting him Thérèse bent down and took from her fat old fingers the carved emerald which, legend had it, had been saved during the Sack of Constantinople. The baby turned it round and round, peering at it with his wise gray eyes, until at last, letting it slip from his chubby fingers, he fell asleep under the jealous guard of the two powerful women who had called him into existence almost by the very force of will. They stood there in adoring silence, the one so primitive, the other so old and wise, that in the end they were very like each other.

Meanwhile The Everlasting, having turned his steps up the hill, sat now among the ruins of the ancient Roman arena overlooking the bay. As a substitute for his rocking chair, he had chosen an overturned stone and there he sat, his book open on his knees, peering out over the Mediterranean. After a time he took from his pocket an apple and bit into it with teeth that were still strong despite the approach of his hundredth birthday. It was a small bitter apple from Brittany, and not half so good as the apples which grew in the orchards of Ohio. Scornfully he

spat the pieces from his mouth and, adjusting his spectacles once more, he bent over with a peering look and began again to read in triumph the Decline and Fall.

Ipswich, Mass.

August 6, 1923.

Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island.

May 15, 1925.

EARLY AUTUMN

FOR
LAURA CANFIELD WOOD

EARLY AUTUMN

CHAPTER I

I

THERE was a ball in the old Pentland house because for the first time in nearly forty years there was a young girl in the family to be introduced to the polite world of Boston and to the elect who had been asked to come on from New York and Philadelphia. So the old house was all bedizened with lanterns and bunches of late spring flowers, and in the bare, white-painted, dignified hallway a negro band, hidden discreetly by flowers, sat making noisy, obscene music.

Sybil Pentland was eighteen and lately returned from school in Paris, whither she had been sent against the advice of the conservative members of her own family, which, it might have been said, included in its connections most of Boston. Already her great-aunt, Mrs. Cassandra Struthers, a formidable woman, had gone through the list of eligible young men—the cousins and connections who were presentable and possessed of fortunes worthy of consideration by a family so solidly rich as the Pentlands. It was toward this end that the ball had been launched and the whole countryside invited, young and old, spry and infirm, middle-aged and dowdy—toward this end and with the idea of showing the world that the family had lost none of its prestige for all the lack of young people in its ranks. For this prestige had once been of national proportions, though now it had shrunk until

the Pentland name was little known outside New England. Rather, it might have been said that the nation had run away from New England and the Pentland family, leaving it stranded and almost forgotten by the side of the path which marked an unruly, almost barbaric progress away from all that the Pentland family and the old house represented.

Sybil's grandfather had seen to it that there was plenty of champagne; and there were tables piled with salads and cold lobster and sandwiches and hot chicken in chafing-dishes. It was as if a family whose whole history had been marked by thrift and caution had suddenly cast to the winds all semblance of restraint in a heroic gesture toward splendor.

But in some way, the gesture seemed to be failing. The negro music sounded wild and spirited, but also indiscreet and out of place in a house so old and solemn. A few men and one or two women known for their fondness for drink consumed a great deal of champagne, but only dulness came of it, dulness and a kind of dead despair. The rich, the splendorous, the gorgeous, the barbaric, had no place in rooms where the kind Mr. Longfellow and the immortal Messrs. Emerson and Lowell had once sat and talked of life. In a hallway, beneath the gaze of a row of ancestors remarkable for the grimness of their faces, the music appeared to lose its quality of abandon; it did not belong in this genteel world. On the fringes of the party there was some drunkenness among the undergraduates imported from Cambridge, but there was very little gaiety. The champagne fell upon barren ground. The party drooped.

Though the affair was given primarily to place Sybil Pentland upon the matrimonial market of this compact world, it served, too, as an introduction for Thérèse Callendar, who had come to spend the summer at Brook Cottage across the stony meadows on the other side of the river from Pentlands; and as a reintroduction of her mother, a far more

vivid and remarkable person. Durham and the countryside thereabouts was familiar enough to her, for she had been born there and passed her childhood within sight of the spire of the Durham town meeting-house. And now, after an absence of twenty years, she had come back out of a world which her own people—the people of her childhood—considered strange and ungenteel. Her world was one filled with queer people, a world remote from the quiet old house at Pentlands and the great brownstone houses of Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street. Indeed, it was this woman, Sabine Callendar, who seemed to have stolen all the thunder at the ball; beside her, neither of the young girls, her own daughter nor Sybil Pentland, appeared to attract any great interest. It was Sabine whom every one noticed, acquaintances of her childhood because they were devoured by curiosity concerning those missing twenty years, and strangers because she was the most picturesque and arresting figure at the ball.

It was not that she surrounded herself by adoring young men eager to dance with her. She was, after all, a woman of forty-six, and she had no tolerance for mooning boys whose conversation was limited to bootlegging and college clubs. It was a success of a singular sort, a triumph of indifference.

People like Aunt Cassie Struthers remembered her as a shy and awkward young girl with a plain face, a good figure and brick-red hair which twenty years ago had been spoken of as "Poor Sabine's ugly red hair." She was a girl in those days who suffered miserably at balls and dinners, who shrank from all social life and preferred solitude. And now, here she was—returned—a tall woman of forty-six, with the same splendid figure, the same long nose and green eyes set a trifle too near each other, but a woman so striking in appearance and the confidence of her bearing that she managed somehow to dim the success even of younger, prettier women and virtually to extinguish the embryonic young things in pink-

and-white tulle. Moving about indolently from room to room, greeting the people who had known her as a girl, addressing here and there an acquaintance which she had made in the course of the queer, independent, nomadic life she had led since divorcing her husband, there was an arrogance in her very walk that frightened the young and produced in the older members of Durham community (all the cousins and connections and indefinable relatives), a sense of profound irritation. Once she had been one of them, and now she seemed completely independent of them all, a traitress who had flung to the winds all the little rules of life drilled into her by Aunt Cassie and other aunts and cousins in the days when she had been an awkward, homely little girl with shocking red hair. Once she had belonged to this tight little world, and now she had returned—a woman who should have been defeated and a little declassée and somehow, irritatingly, was not. Instead, she was a “figure” much sought after in the world, enveloped by the mysterious cloud of esteem which surrounds such persons—a woman, in short, who was able to pick her friends from the ranks of distinguished and even celebrated people. It was not only because this was true, but because people like Aunt Cassie *knew* it was true, that she aroused interest and even indignation. She had turned her back upon them all and no awful fate had overtaken her; instead, she had taken a firm hold upon life and made of it a fine, even a glittering, success; and this is a thing which is not easily forgiven.

As she moved through the big rooms—complete and perfect from her superbly done, burnished red hair to the tips of her silver slippers—there was about her an assurance and an air of confidence in her own perfection that bordered upon insolence. There was a hard radiance and beauty in the brilliant green dress and the thin chain of diamonds that dimmed all of the others. that made most of the women seem dowdy and put

together with pins. Undoubtedly her presence also served to dampen the gaiety. One knew from the look in the disdainful green eyes and the faint mocking smile on the frankly painted red mouth that she was aware of the effect she made and was delighted with her triumph. Wherever she went, always escorted by some man she had chosen with the air of conferring a favor, a little stir preceded her. She was indeed very disagreeable. . . .

If she had a rival in all the crowd that filled the echoing old house, it was Olivia Pentland—Sybil's mother—who moved about, alone most of the time, watching her guests, acutely conscious that the ball was not all it should have been. There was about her nothing flamboyant and arresting, nothing which glittered with the worldly hardness of the green dress and the diamonds and burnished red hair of Sabine Callendar; she was, rather, a soft woman, of gentleness and poise, whose dark beauty conquered in a slower, more subtle fashion. You did not notice her at once among all the guests; you became aware of her slowly, as if her presence had the effect of stealing over you with the vagueness of a perfume. Suddenly you marked her from among all the others . . . with a sense of faint excitement . . . a pale white face, framed by smooth black hair drawn back low over the brows in a small knot at the back of her head. You noticed the clear, frank blue eyes, that in some lights seemed almost black, and most of all you noticed when she spoke that her voice was low, warm, and in a way irresistible, a voice with a hundred shades of color. She had a way, too, of laughing, when she was struck by the absurdity of something, that was like a child. One knew her at once for a great lady. It was impossible to believe that she was nearly forty and the mother of Sybil and a boy of fifteen.

Circumstance and a wisdom of her own had made of her a woman who seemed inactive and self-effacing. She had a

manner of doing things effortlessly, with a great quietness, and yet, after one came to know her, one felt that she missed little which took place within sight or hearing—not only the obvious things which any stupid person might have noticed, but the subtle, indefinite currents which passed from one person to another. She possessed, it seemed, a marvelous gift for smoothing out troubles. A security, of the sort which often marks those who suffer from a too great awareness, enveloped and preceded her, turning to calm all the troubled world about her. Yet she was disturbing, too, in an odd, indefinable way. There was always a remoteness and a mystery, a sense almost of the *fey*. It was only after one had known her for a long time, enveloped in the quietness of her pleasant presence, that a faint sense of uneasiness was born. It would occur to you, with the surprise almost of a shock, that the woman you saw before you, the woman who was so gentle and serene, was not Olivia Pentland at all, but a kind of lay figure which concealed, far beneath the veneer of charm, a woman you did not know at all, who was remote and sad and perhaps lonely. In the end, she disturbed the person of discernment far more profoundly than the glittering, disagreeable Sabine Callendar.

In the midst of the noise and confusion of the ball, she had been moving about, now in this big room, now in that one, talking quietly to her guests, watching them, seeing that all went well; and, like all the others, she was fascinated at the spectacle of Sabine's rebellion and triumph, perhaps even a little amused at the childishness of such defiance in a woman of forty-six who was clever, independent and even distinguished, who need not have troubled to flaunt her success.

Watching Sabine, whom she knew intimately enough, she had guessed that underneath the shell made so superbly by hairdresser, couturier and jeweler there lay hidden an awkward, red-haired little girl who was having her revenge now,

walking roughshod over all the prejudices and traditions of such people as Aunt Cassie and John Pentland and Cousin Struthers Smallwood, D.D., whom Sabine always called "the Apostle to the Genteel." It was almost, thought Olivia, as if Sabine, even after an exile of twenty years, was still afraid of them and that curious, undefeatable power which they represented.

But Sabine, she knew, was observing the party at the same time. She had watched her all the evening in the act of "absorbing" it; she knew that when Sabine walked across from Brook Cottage the next day, she would know everything that had happened at the ball, for she had a passion for inspecting life. Beneath the stony mask of indifference there boiled a perpetual and passionate interest in the intricacies of human affairs. Sabine herself had once described it as "the curse of analysis which took all the zest out of life."

She was fond of Sabine as a creature unique in the realm of her experience, one who was amusing and actually made fetishes of truth and reality. She had a way of turning her intellect (for it was really a great intellect) upon some tangled, hopeless situation to dissolve it somehow into its proper elements and make it appear suddenly clear, uncomplicated and, more often than not, unpleasant; because the truth was not always a sweet and pleasant thing.

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No one suffered more keenly from Sabine's triumphant return than the invincible Aunt Cassie. In a way, she had always looked upon Sabine, even in the long years of her voluntary exile from the delights of Durham, as her own property, much as she might have looked upon a dog, if, indeed, the old lady had been able to bear the society of anything so untidy as a dog. Childless herself, she had ex-

exercised all her theories of upbringing upon the unfortunate orphaned little daughter of her husband's brother.

At the moment, the old lady sat half-way down the white stairs, her sharp black eyes surveying the ball with a faint air of disapproval. The noisy music made her nervous and uneasy, and the way young girls had of using paint and powder seemed to her cheap and common. "One might as well brush one's teeth at the dinner-table." Secretly, she kept comparing everything with the ball given for herself forty years earlier, an event which had resulted at length in the capture of Mr. Struthers. Dressed economically (for she made it a point of honor to live on the income of her income), and in mourning for a husband dead eight years earlier, she resembled a dignified but slightly uneasy crow perched on a fence.

It was Sabine who observed that Aunt Cassie and her "lady companion," Miss Peavey, sitting on the steps together, resembled a crow and a pouter pigeon. Miss Peavey was not only fat, she was actually bulbous—one of those women inclined by nature toward "flesh," who would have been fat on a diet of sawdust and distilled water; and she had come into the family life nearly thirty years earlier as a companion, a kind of slave, to divert Aunt Cassie during the long period of her invalidism. She had remained there ever since, taking the place of a husband who was dead and children who had never been born.

There was something childlike about Miss Peavey—some people said that she was not quite bright—but she suited Aunt Cassie to a T, for she was as submissive as a child and wholly dependent in a financial sense. Aunt Cassie even gave her enough to make up for the losses she incurred by keeping a small shop in Boston devoted to the sale of "artistic" pottery. Miss Peavey was a lady, and though penniless, was "well connected" in Boston. At sixty she had grown too heavy for her birdlike little feet and so took very little exercise. To-

night she was dressed in a very fancy gown covered with lace and sequins and passementerie, rather in the mode which some one had told her was her style in the far-off days of her girlhood. Her hair was streaked with gray and cut short in a shaggy, uneven fashion; not, however, because short hair was *chic*, but because she had cut it ten years before short hair had been heard of, in a sudden futile gesture of freedom at the terrible moment she made her one feeble attempt to escape Aunt Cassie and lead her own life. She had come back in the end, when her poor savings gave out and bankruptcy faced her, to be received by Aunt Cassie with dignified sighs and flutters as a returned and repentant prodigal. In this rôle she had lived ever since in a state of complete subjection. She was Aunt Cassie's creature now, to go where Aunt Cassie ordered, to do as she was bid, to be an ear-piece when there was at hand no one more worthy of address.

At the sight of Sabine's green dress and red hair moving through the big hall below them, Aunt Cassie said, with a gleam in her eye: "Sabine seems to be worried about her daughter. The poor child doesn't seem to be having a success, but I suppose it's no wonder. The poor thing is very plain. I suppose she got the fallow skin from her father. He was part Greek and French. . . . Sabine was never popular as a young girl herself."

And she fell to speculating for the hundredth time on the little-known circumstances of Sabine's unhappy marriage and divorce, turning the morsels over and over again with a variety of speculation and the interjection of much pious phraseology; for in Aunt Cassie's speech God seemed to have a hand in everything. He had a way of delivering trials and blessings indiscriminately, and so in the end became responsible for everything.

Indeed, she grew a bit spiteful about Sabine, for there was in the back of her mind the memory of an encounter, a day

or two earlier, when she had been put completely to rout. It was seldom that Aunt Cassie met any one who was a match for her, and when such an encounter took place the memory of it rankled until she found some means of subduing the offender. With Miss Peavey she was completely frank, for through long service this plump, elderly virgin had come to be a sort of confessor in whose presence Aunt Cassie wore no mask. She was always saying, "Don't mind Miss Peavey. She doesn't matter."

"I find Sabine extremely hard and worldly," she was saying. "I would never know her for the same modest young girl she was on leaving me." She sighed abysmally and continued, "But, then, we mustn't judge. I suppose the poor girl has had a great deal of misery. I pity her to the depths of my heart!"

In Aunt Cassie's speeches, in every phrase, there was always a certain mild theatrical overtone as if she sought constantly to cast a sort of melodramatic haze over all she said. Nothing was ever stated simply. Everything from the sight of a pot of sour cream to the death of her husband affected her extravagantly, to the depths of her soul.

But this brought no response from Miss Peavey, who seemed lost in the excitement of watching the young people, her round candid eyes shining through her pince-nez with the eagerness of one who has spent her whole life as a "lady companion." At moments like this, Aunt Cassie felt that Miss Peavey was not quite bright, and sometimes said so.

Undiscouraged, she went on. "Olivia looks bad, too, tonight . . . very tired and worn. I don't like those circles under her eyes. . . . I've thought for a long time that she was unhappy about something."

But Miss Peavey's volatile nature continued to lose itself completely in the spectacle of young girls who were so different from the girls of her day; and in the fascinating sight

of Mr. Hoskins, a fat, sentimental, middle-aged neighbor who had taken a glass too much champagne and was talking archly to the patient Olivia. Miss Peavey had quite forgotten herself in the midst of so much gaiety. She did not even see the glances of Aunt Cassie in her direction—glances which plainly said, “Wait until I get you alone!”

For a long time Aunt Cassie had been brooding over what she called “Olivia’s strange behavior.” It was a thing which she had noticed for the first time a month or two earlier when Olivia, in the midst of one of Aunt Cassie’s morning calls, had begun suddenly, quietly, to weep and had left the room without a word of explanation. It had gone from bad to worse lately; she felt Olivia slipping away from all control directly in opposition to her own benevolent advice. There was the matter of this very ball. Olivia had ignored her counsels of economy and thrift, and now Aunt Cassie was suffering, as if the champagne which flowed so freely were blood drawn from her own veins. Not for a century, since Savina Pentland purchased a parure of pearls and emeralds, had so much Pentland money been expended at one time on mere pleasure.

She disapproved, too, of the youthfulness of Olivia and of Sabine. Women of their ages ought not to look so fresh and young. There was something vulgar, even a little improper, in a woman like Sabine who at forty-six looked thirty-five. At thirty, Aunt Cassie herself had settled down as a middle-aged woman, and since then she had not changed greatly. At sixty-five, “childless and alone in the world” (save, of course, for Miss Peavey), she was much the same as she had been at thirty in the rôle of wife to the “trying Mr. Struthers.” The only change had been her recovery from a state of semi-invalidism, a miracle occurring simultaneously with the passing of Mr. Struthers.

She had never quite forgiven Olivia for being an outsider

who had come into the intricate web of life at Pentlands out of (of all places) Chicago. Wisps of mystery and a faint sense of the alien had clung to her ever since. Of course, it wasn't to be expected that Olivia could understand entirely what it meant to marry into a family whose history was so closely woven into that of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the life of Boston. What could it mean to Olivia that Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell and Dr. Holmes had often spent weeks at Pentlands? That Mr. Emerson himself had come there for week-ends? Still (Aunt Cassie admitted to herself), Olivia had done remarkably well. She had been wise enough to watch and wait and not go ahead strewing her path with blunders.

Into the midst of these thoughts the figure of Olivia herself appeared, moving toward the stairway, walking beside Sabine. They were laughing over something, Sabine in the sly, mocking way she had, and Olivia mischievously, with a suspicious twinkle in her eyes. Aunt Cassie was filled with an awful feeling that they were sharing some joke about the people at the ball, perhaps even about herself and Miss Peavey. Since Sabine had returned, she felt that Olivia had grown even more strange and rebellious; nevertheless, she admitted to herself that there was a distinction about them both. She preferred the quiet distinction of Olivia to the violence of the impression made by the glittering Sabine. The old lady sensed the distinction, but, belonging to a generation which lived upon emotion rather than analysis, she did not get to the root of it. She did not see that one felt at once on seeing Olivia, "Here is a lady!"—perhaps, in the true sense of the word, the only lady in the room. There was a gentleness about her and a softness and a proud sort of poise—all qualities of which Aunt Cassie approved; it was the air of mystery which upset the old lady. One never knew quite what Olivia was thinking. She was so gentle and soft-spoken. Sometimes

of late, when pressing Olivia too hotly, Aunt Cassie, aware of rousing something indefinably perilous in the nature of the younger woman, drew back in alarm.

Rising stiffly, the old lady groaned a little and, moving down the stairs, said, "I must go, Olivia dear," and, turning, "Miss Peavey will go with me."

Miss Peavey would have stayed, because she was enjoying herself, looking down on all those young people, but she had obeyed the commands of Aunt Cassie for too long, and now she rose, complaining faintly, and made ready to leave.

Olivia urged them to stay, and Sabine, looking at the old lady out of green eyes that held a faint glitter of hatred, said abruptly: "I always thought you stayed until the bitter end, Aunt Cassie."

A sigh answered her . . . a sigh filled with implications regarding Aunt Cassie's position as a lonely, ill, bereft, widowed creature for whom life was finished long ago. "I am not young any longer, Sabine," she said. "And I feel that the old ought to give way to the young. There comes a time. . . ."

Sabine gave an unearthly chuckle. "Ah," she said, in her hard voice, "I haven't begun to give up yet. I am still good for years."

"You're not a child any more, Sabine," the old lady said sharply.

"No, certainly I'm not a child any more." And the remark silenced Aunt Cassie, for it struck home at the memory of that wretched scene in which she had been put to rout so skilfully.

There was a great bustle about getting the two old ladies under way, a great search for cloaks and scarfs and impedimenta; but at last they went off, Aunt Cassie saying over her thin, high shoulder, "Will you say good-by to your dear,

father-in-law, Olivia? I suppose he's playing bridge with Mrs. Soames."

"Yes," replied Olivia from the terrace, "he's playing bridge with Mrs. Soames."

Aunt Cassie merely cleared her throat, forcibly, and with a deep significance. In her look, as in the sound of her voice, she managed to launch a flood of disapproval upon the behavior of old John Pentland and old Mrs. Soames.

Bidding the driver to go very slowly, she climbed into her shabby, antiquated motor, followed respectfully by Miss Peavey, and drove off down the long elm-bordered drive between the lines of waiting motors.

Olivia's "dear father-in-law" was Aunt Cassie's own brother, but she chose always to relate him to Olivia, as if in some way it bound Olivia more closely, more hopelessly, into the fabric of the family.

As the two younger women reentered the house, Olivia asked, "Where's Thérèse? I haven't seen her for more than an hour."

"She's gone home."

"Thérèse . . . gone home . . . from a ball given for her!"

Olivia halted in astonishment and stood leaning against the wall, looking so charming and lovely that Sabine thought, "It's a sin for a woman so beautiful to have such a life."

Aloud Sabine said, "I caught her stealing away. She walked across to the cottage. She said she hated it and was miserable and bored and would rather be in bed." Sabine shrugged her handsome shoulders and added, "So I let her go. What difference does it make?"

"None, I suppose."

"I never force her to do things of this sort. I had too

much forcing when I was young; Thérèse is to do exactly as she likes and be independent. The trouble is, she's been spoilt by knowing older men and men who talk intelligently." She laughed and added, "I was wrong about coming back here. I'll never marry her off in this part of the world. The men are all afraid of her."

Olivia kept seeing the absurd figure of Sabine's daughter, small and dark, with large burning eyes and an air of sulky independence, striding off on foot through the dust of the lane that led back to Brook Cottage. She was so different from her own daughter, the quiet, well-mannered Sybil.

"I don't think she's properly impressed by Durham," said Olivia, with a sudden mischievous smile.

"No . . . she's bored by it."

Olivia paused to say good-night to a little procession of guests . . . the Pingree girls dressed alike in pink tulle; the plump Miss Perkins, who had the finest collection of samplers in New England; Rodney Phillips, whose life was devoted to breeding springers and behaving like a perfect English gentleman; old Mr. Tilney, whose fortune rested on the mills of Durham and Lynn and Salem; and Bishop Smallwood, a cousin of the Pentlands and Sabine (whom Sabine called the Apostle of the Genteel). The Bishop complimented Olivia on the beauty of her daughter and coquetted heavily with Sabine. Motors rushed out from among the lilacs and syringas and bore them away one by one.

When they had gone Sabine said abruptly, "What sort of man is this Higgins. . . . I mean your head stableman?"

"A good sort," replied Olivia. "The children are very fond of him. Why?"

"Oh . . . no reason at all. I happened to think of him to-night because I noticed him standing on the terrace just now looking in at the ball."

"He was a jockey once . . . a good one, I believe, until

he got too heavy. He's been with us ten years. He's good and reliable and sometimes very funny. Old Mr. Pentland depends on him for everything. . . . Only he has a way of getting into scrapes with the girls from the village. He seems irresistible to them . . . and he's an immoral scamp."

Sabine's face lighted up suddenly, as if she had made a great discovery. "I thought so," she observed, and wandered away abruptly to continue the business of "absorbing" the ball.

She had asked about Higgins because the man was stuck there in her brain, set in the midst of a strange, confused impression that disturbed a mind usually marked by precision and clarity. She did not understand why it was that he remained the most vivid of all the kaleidoscopic procession of the ball. He had been an outsider, a servant, looking in upon it, and yet there he was—a man whom she had never noticed before—vivid and clear-cut, dominating the whole evening.

It had happened a little earlier when, standing in the windowed alcove of the old red-paneled writing-room, she had turned her back for a moment on the ball, to look out upon the distant marshes and the sea, across meadows where every stone and tree and hedge was thrown into a brilliant relief by the clarity of the moonlight and the thin New England air. And trapped suddenly by the still and breathless beauty of the meadows and marshes and distant white dunes, lost in memories more than twenty years old, she had found herself thinking: "It was always like this . . . rather beautiful and hard and cold and a little barren, only I never saw it before. It's only now, when I've come back after twenty years, that I see my own country exactly as it is."

And then, standing there quite alone, she had become aware slowly that she was being watched by some one. There was a sudden movement among the lilacs that stood a little way off wrapped in thick black shadows . . . the faintest stirring

of the leaves that drew her sharply back to a consciousness of where she was and why she was there; and, focusing all her attention, she was able to make out presently a short, stocky little figure, and a white face peering out from among the branches, watching the dancers who moved about inside the house. The sight produced in her suddenly a sensation of uneasiness and a faint prickling of the skin, which slipped away presently when she recognized the odd, prematurely wrinkled face of Higgins, the Pentland groom. She must have seen him a dozen times before, barely noticing him, but now she saw him with a kind of illuminating clarity, in a way which made his face and figure unforgettable.

He was clad in the eternal riding-breeches and a sleeveless cotton shirt that exposed the short, hairy, muscular arms. Standing there he seemed, with his arched, firmly planted legs, like some creature rooted into the soil . . . like the old apple-tree which stood in the moonlight showering the last of its white petals on the black lawn. There was something unpleasant in the sight, as if (she thought afterwards) she had been watched without knowing it by some animal of an uncanny intelligence.

And then abruptly he had slipped away again, shyly, among the branches of the lilacs . . . like a faun.

Olivia, looking after Sabine as she walked away, smiled at the knowledge of where she was bound. Sabine would go into the old writing-room and there, sitting in a corner, would pretend that she was interested in the latest number of the *Mercure de France* or some fashion paper, and all the time she would be watching, listening, while old John Pentland and poor battered old Mrs. Soames sat playing bridge with a pair of contemporaries. Sabine, she knew, wanted to probe the lives of the two old people. She wasn't content like the others at Pentlands to go on pretending that there had never

been anything between them. She wanted to get to the root of the story, to know the truth. It was the truth, always the truth, which fascinated Sabine.

And Olivia felt a sudden, swift, almost poignant wave of affection for the abrupt, grim woman, an affection which it was impossible to express because Sabine was too scornful of all sentiment and too shut in ever to receive gracefully a demonstration; yet she fancied that Sabine knew she was fond of her, in the same shy, silent way that old John Pentland knew she was fond of him. It was impossible for either of them ever to speak of such simple things as affection.

Since Sabine had come to Durham, it seemed to Olivia that life was a little less barren and not quite so hopeless. There was in Sabine a curious hard, solid strength which the others, save only the old man, lacked completely. Sabine had made some discovery in life that had set her free . . . of everything but that terrible barrier of false coldness.

In the midst of these thoughts came another procession of retreating guests, and the sadness, slipping away from Olivia's face, gave way to a perfect, artificial sort of gaiety. She smiled, she murmured, "Good-night, must you go," and, "Good-night, I'm so glad that you liked the ball." She was arch with silly old men and kind to the shy young ones and repeated the same phrases over and over again monotonously. People went away saying, "What a charming woman Olivia Pentland is!"

Yet immediately afterward she did not remember who had passed by her.

One by one the guests departed, and presently the black musicians packed up their instruments and went away, and at last Sybil appeared, shy and dark, looking a little pale and tired in her clinging gown of pale green. At sight of her daughter a little thrill of pride ran through Olivia. She was the loveliest of all the girls at the ball, not the most

flamboyant, but the gentlest and really the most beautiful. She possessed the same slow beauty of her mother, which enveloped one in a kind of mist that lingered long after she herself had gone away. She was neither loud and manish and vulgar like the "horsey" women nor common like the girls who used too much paint and tried to behave like women of the world. There was already about her the timelessness that envelops a lady no matter the generation in which she appears; there was a mystery, a sophistication and knowledge of life which put to rout all the cheap flashiness of the others. And yet, somehow, that same cool, shy poise and beauty frightened people. Boys who were used to calling young girls "Good old So-and-so" found themselves helpless before the dignity of a young girl who looked in her green gown a little like a cool wood-nymph. It troubled Olivia profoundly, not for herself, but because she wanted the girl to be happy—more than that, to know the depths of happiness which she herself had sensed but never found. It was in a way as if she saw herself again in Sybil, as if looking back now from the pinnacle of her own experience she could guide this younger self, standing on the brink of life, along paths less barren than those trod by her own feet. It was so necessary that Sybil should fall in love with a man who would make her happy. With most girls it would make little difference one way or another, so long as they had money; if they were unhappy or bored they would divorce their husbands and try again because that was the rule in their world. But with Sybil, marriage would be either an immense, incalculable happiness or a profound and hopeless tragedy.

She thought suddenly of what Sabine had said of Thérèse a little while before. "I was wrong about coming back here. I'll never marry her off in this part of the world."

It was true somehow of Sybil. The girl, in some mysterious fashion, knew what it was she wanted; and this was

not a life which was safe and assured, running smoothly in a rigid groove fixed by tradition and circumstance. It was not marriage with a man who was like all the other men in his world. It went deeper than all that. She wanted somehow to get far down beneath the surface of that life all about her, deep down where there was a savor to all she did. It was a hunger which Olivia understood well enough.

The girl approached her mother and, slipping her arm about her waist, stood there, looking for all the world like Olivia's sister.

"Have you enjoyed it?" asked Olivia.

"Yes. . . . It's been fun."

Olivia smiled. "But not too much?"

"No, not too much." Sybil laughed abruptly, as if some humorous memory had suddenly come to life.

"Thérèse ran away," said her mother.

"I know . . . she told me she was going to."

"She didn't like it."

"No . . . she thought the boys stupid."

"They're very much like all boys of their age. It's not an interesting time."

Sybil frowned a little. "Thérèse doesn't think so. She says all they have to talk about is their clubs and drinking . . . neither subject is of very much interest."

"They might have been, if you'd lived here always . . . like the other girls. You and Thérèse see it from the outside." The girl didn't answer, and Olivia asked: "You don't think I was wrong in sending you to France to school?"

Quickly Sybil looked up. "Oh, no . . . no," she said, and then added with smoldering eagerness, "I wouldn't have changed it for anything in the world."

"I thought you might enjoy life more if you saw a little more than one corner of it. . . . I wanted you to be away from here for a little time." (She did not say what she

thought—"because I wanted you to escape the blight that touches everything at Pentlands.")

"I'm glad," the girl replied. "I'm glad because it makes everything different. . . . I can't explain it. . . . Only as if everything had more meaning than it would have otherwise."

Suddenly Olivia kissed her daughter and said: "You're a clever girl; things aren't wasted on you. And now go along to bed. I'll stop in to say good-night."

She watched the girl as she moved away through the big empty hall past the long procession of Pentland family portraits, thinking all the while that beside them Sybil seemed so fresh and full of warm eager life; and when at last she turned, she encountered her father-in-law and old Mrs. Soames moving along the narrow passage that led from the writing-room. It struck her sharply that the gaunt, handsome old John Pentland seemed really old to-night, in a way he had never been before, old and a little bent, with purplish circles under his bright black eyes.

Old Mrs. Soames, with her funny, intricate, dyed-black coiffure and rouged cheeks and sagging chin supported by a collar of pearls, leaned on his arm—the wreck of a handsome woman who had fallen back upon such silly, obvious tricks as rouge and dye—a vain, tragic old woman who never knew that she was a figure of fun. At sight of her, there rose in Olivia's mind a whole vista of memories—assembly after assembly with Mrs. Soames in stomacher and tiara standing in the reception line bowing and smirking over rites that had survived in a provincial fashion some darker, more barbaric, social age.

And the sight of the old man walking gently and slowly, out of deference to Mrs. Soames' infirmities, filled Olivia with a sudden desire to weep.

John Pentland said, "I'm going to drive over with Mrs. Soames, Olivia dear. You can leave the door open for me."

And giving his daughter-in-law a quick look of affection he led Mrs. Soames away across the terrace to his motor.

It was only after they had gone that Olivia discovered Sabine standing in the corridor in her brilliant green dress watching the two old people from the shadow of one of the deep-set windows. For a moment, absorbed in the sight of John Pentland helping Mrs. Soames with a grim courtliness into the motor, neither of them spoke, but as the motor drove away down the long drive under the moon-silvered elms, Sabine sighed and said, "I can remember her as a great beauty . . . a really great beauty. There aren't any more like her, who make their beauty a profession. I used to see her when I was a little girl. She was beautiful—like Diana in the hunting-field. They've been like that for . . . for how long. . . . It must be forty years, I suppose."

"I don't know," said Olivia quietly. "They've been like that ever since I came to Pentlands." (And as she spoke she was overcome by a terrible feeling of sadness, of an abysmal futility. It had come to her more and more often of late, so often that at times it alarmed her lest she was growing morbid.)

Sabine was speaking again in her familiar, precise, metallic voice. "I wonder," she said, "if there has ever been anything. . . ."

Olivia, divining the rest of the question, answered it quickly, interrupting the speech. "No . . . I'm sure there's never been anything more than we've seen. . . . I know him well enough to know that."

For a long time Sabine remained thoughtful, and at last she said: "No . . . I suppose you're right. There couldn't have been anything. He's the last of the Puritans. . . . The others don't count. They go on pretending, but they don't believe any more. They've no vitality left. They're only hypocrites and shadows. . . . He's the last of the royal line."

She picked up her silver cloak and, flinging it about her fine white shoulders, said abruptly: "It's almost morning. I must get some sleep. The time's coming when I have to think about such things. We're not as young as we once were, Olivia."

On the moonlit terrace she turned and asked: "Where was O'Hara? I didn't see him."

"No . . . he was asked. I think he didn't come on account of Anson and Aunt Cassie."

The only reply made by Sabine was a kind of scornful grunt. She turned away and entered her motor. The ball was over now and the last guest gone, and she had missed nothing—Aunt Cassie, nor old John Pentland, nor O'Hara's absence, nor even Higgins watching them all in the moonlight from the shadow of the lilacs.

The night had turned cold as the morning approached and Olivia, standing in the doorway, shivered a little as she watched Sabine enter her motor and drive away. Far across the meadows she saw the lights of John Pentland's motor racing along the lane on the way to the house of old Mrs. Soames; she watched them as they swept out of sight behind the birch thicket and reappeared once more beyond the turnpike, and as she turned away at last it occurred to her that the life at Pentlands had undergone some subtle change since the return of Sabine.

CHAPTER II

It was Olivia's habit (and in some way every small action at Pentlands came inevitably to be a habit) to go about the house each night before climbing the paneled stairs, to see that all was in order, and by instinct she made the little tour as usual after Sabine had disappeared, stopping here and there to speak to the servants, bidding them to go to bed and clear away in the morning. On her way she found that the door of the drawing-room, which had been open all the evening, was now, for some reason, closed.

It was a big square room belonging to the old part of the house that had been built by the Pentland who made a fortune out of equipping privateers and practising a sort of piracy upon British merchantmen—a room which in the passing of years had come to be a museum filled with the relics and souvenirs of a family which could trace its ancestry back three hundred years to a small dissenting shopkeeper who had stepped ashore on the bleak New England coast very soon after Miles Standish and Priscilla Alden. It was a room much used by all the family and had a worn, pleasant look that compensated for the monstrous and incongruous collection of pictures and furniture. There were two or three Sheraton and Heppelwhite chairs and a handsome old mahogany table, and there were a plush sofa and a vast rocking-chair of uncertain ancestry, and a hideous bronze lamp that had been the gift of Mr. Longfellow to old John Pentland's mother. There were two execrable water-colors—one of the Tiber and the Castle San Angelo and one of an Italian village—made by

Miss Maria Pentland during a tour of Italy in 1846, and a stuffed chair with tassels, a gift from old Colonel Higginson, a frigid steel engraving of the Signing of the Declaration which hung over the white mantelpiece, and a complete set of Woodrow Wilson's History of the United States given by Senator Lodge (whom Aunt Cassie always referred to as "dear Mr. Lodge"). In this room were collected mementoes of long visits paid by Mr. Lowell and Mr. Emerson and General Curtis and other good New Englanders, all souvenirs which Olivia had left exactly as she found them when she came to the big house as the bride of Anson Pentland; and to those who knew the room and the family there was nothing un-beautiful or absurd about it. The effect was historical. On entering it one almost expected a guide to step forward and say, "Mr. Longfellow once wrote at this desk," and, "This was Senator Lodge's favorite chair." Olivia knew each tiny thing in the room with a sharp sense of intimacy.

She opened the door softly and found that the lights were still burning and, strangest of all, that her husband was sitting at the old desk surrounded by the musty books and yellowed letters and papers from which he was compiling laboriously a book known as "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony." The sight of him surprised her, for it was his habit to retire punctually at eleven every night, even on such an occasion as this. He had disappeared hours earlier from the ball, and he still sat here in his dinner coat, though it was long after midnight.

She had entered the room so softly that he did not hear her and for a moment she remained silently looking down at him, as if undetermined whether to speak or to go quietly away. He sat with his back to her so that the sloping shoulders and the thin, ridged neck and partly bald head stood outlined against the white of the paneling. Suddenly, as if conscious of being watched, he turned and looked at her. He

was a man of forty-nine who looked older, with a long horse-face like Aunt Cassie's—a face that was handsome in a tired, yellow sort of way—and small, round eyes the color of pale-blue porcelain. At the sight of Olivia the face took on a pouting expression of sourness . . . a look which she knew well as one that he wore when he meant to complain of something.

"You are sitting up very late," she observed quietly, with a deliberate air of having noticed nothing unusual.

"I was waiting to speak to you. I want to talk with you. Please sit down for a moment."

There was an odd sense of strangeness in their manner toward each other, as if there had never been, even years before when the children were babies, any great intimacy between them. On his part there was, too, a sort of stiff and nervous formality, rather quaint and Victorian, and touched by an odd air of timidity. He was a man who would always do not perhaps the proper thing, but the thing accepted by his world as "proper."

It was the first time since morning that the conversation between them had emerged from the set pattern which it had followed day after day for so many years. When he said that he wanted to speak to her, it meant usually that there was some complaint to be made against the servants, more often than not against Higgins, whom he disliked with an odd, inexplicable intensity.

Olivia sat down, irritated that he should have chosen this hour when she was tired, to make some petty comment on the workings of the house. Half without thinking and half with a sudden warm knowledge that it would annoy him to see her smoking, she lighted a cigarette; and as she sat there, waiting until he had blotted with scrupulous care the page on which he had been writing, she became conscious slowly of a strange, unaccustomed desire to be disagreeable, to create

in some way an excitement that would shatter for a moment the overwhelming sense of monotony and so relieve her nerves. She thought, "What has come over me? Am I one of those women who enjoys working up scenes?"

He rose from his chair and stood, very tall and thin, with drooping shoulders, looking down at her out of the pale eyes. "It's about Sybil," he said. "I understand that she goes riding every morning with this fellow O'Hara."

"That's true," replied Olivia quietly. "They go every morning before breakfast, before the rest of us are out."

He frowned and assumed almost mechanically a manner of severe dignity. "And you mean to say that you have known about it all along?"

"They meet down in the meadows by the old gravel-pit because he doesn't care to come up to the house."

"He knows, perhaps, that he wouldn't be welcome."

Olivia smiled a little ironically. "I'm sure that's the reason. That's why he didn't come to-night, though I asked him. You must know, Anson, that I don't feel as you do about him."

"No, I suppose not. You rarely do."

"There's no need to be unpleasant," she said quietly.

"You seem to know a great deal about it."

"Sybil tells me everything she does. It is much better to have it that way, I think."

Watching him, it gave her a faint, warm sense of satisfaction to see that Anson was annoyed by her calmness, and yet she was a little ashamed, too, for wanting the excitement of a small scene, just a tiny scene, to make life seem a little more exciting. He said, "But you know how Aunt Cassie and my father feel about O'Hara."

Then, for the first time, Olivia began to see light in the darkness. "Your father knows all about it, Anson. He has gone with them himself on the red mare, once or twice."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why should I make up such a ridiculous lie? Besides, your father and I get on very well. You know that." It was a mild thrust which had its success, for Anson turned away angrily. She had really said to him, "Your father comes to *me* about everything, not to *you*. He is not the one who objects or I should have known." Aloud she said, "Besides, I have seen him with my own eyes."

"Then I will take it on my own responsibility. I don't like it and I want it stopped."

At this speech Olivia's brows arched ever so slightly with a look which might have been interpreted either as one of surprise or one of mockery or perhaps a little of both. For a moment she sat quite still, thinking, and at last she said, "Am I right in supposing that Aunt Cassie is at the bottom of this?" When he made no reply she continued, "Aunt Cassie must have gotten up very early to see them off." Again a silence, and the dark little devil in Olivia urged her to say, "Or perhaps she got her information from the servants. She often does, you know."

Slowly, while she was speaking, her husband's face had grown more and more sour. The very color of the skin seemed to have changed so that it appeared faintly green in the light from the Victorian luster just above his narrow head.

"Olivia, you have no right to speak of my aunt in that way."

"We needn't go into that. I think you know that what I said was the truth." And a slow warmth began to steal over her. She was getting beneath his skin. After all those long years, he was finding that she was not entirely gentle.

He was exasperated now and astonished. In a more gentle voice he said, "Olivia, I don't understand what has come over you lately."

She found herself thinking, wildly, "Perhaps he is going to soften. Perhaps there is still a chance of warmth in him. Perhaps even now, after so long, he is going to be pleasant and kind and perhaps . . . perhaps . . . more."

"You're very queer," he was saying. "I'm not the only one who finds you so."

"No," said Olivia, a little sadly. "Aunt Cassie does, too. She's been telling all the neighborhood that I seem to be unhappy. Perhaps it's because I'm a little tired. I've not had much rest for a long time now . . . from Jack, from Aunt Cassie, from your father . . . and . . . from *her*." At the last word she made a curious little half-gesture in the direction of the dark north wing of the big house.

She watched him, conscious that he was shocked and startled by her mentioning in a single breath so many things which they never discussed at Pentlands, things which they buried in silence and tried to destroy by pretending that they did not exist.

"We ought to speak of those things, sometimes," she continued sadly. "Sometimes when we are entirely alone with no one about to hear, when it doesn't make any difference. We can't pretend forever that they don't exist."

For a time he was silent, groping obviously, in a kind of desperation for something to answer. At last he said feebly, "And yet you sit up all night playing bridge with Sabine and old Mrs. Soames and Father."

"That does me good. You must admit that it is a change at least."

But he only answered, "I don't understand you," and began to pace up and down in agitation while she sat there waiting, actually waiting, for the thing to work itself up to a climax. She had a sudden feeling of victory, of intoxication such as she had not known in years, not since she was a young girl; and at the same time she wanted to laugh, wildly, hys-

terically, at the sight of Anson, so tall and thin, prancing up and down.

Opposite her he halted abruptly and said, "And I can see no good in inviting Mrs. Soames here so often."

She saw now that the tension, the excitement between them, was greater even than she had imagined, for Anson had spoken of Mrs. Soames and his father, a thing which in the family no one ever mentioned. He had done it quite openly, of his own free will.

"What harm can it do now? What difference can it make?" she asked. "It is the only pleasure left to the poor battered old thing, and one of the few left to your father."

Anson began to mutter in disgust. "It is a silly affair . . . two old . . . old. . . ." He did not finish the sentence, for there was only one word that could have finished it and that was a word which no gentleman and certainly no Pentland ever used in referring to his own father.

"Perhaps," said Olivia, "it is a silly affair now. . . . I'm not so sure that it always was."

"What do you mean by that? Do you mean. . . ." Again he fumbled for words, groping to avoid using the words that clearly came into his mind. It was strange to see him brought face to face with realities, to see him grow so helpless and muddled. "Do you mean," he stammered, "that my father has ever behaved . . ." he choked and then added, "dishonorably."

"Anson . . . I feel strangely like being honest to-night . . . just for once . . . just for once."

"You are succeeding only in being perverse."

"No . . ." and she found herself smiling sadly, "unless you mean that in this house . . . in this room . . ." She made a gesture which swept within the circle of her white arm all that collection of Victorian souvenirs, all the mementos

toes of a once sturdy and powerful Puritan family, “. . . in this room to be truthful and honest is to be perverse.”

He would have interrupted her here, angrily, but she raised her hand and continued, “No, Anson; I shall tell you honestly what I think . . . whether you want to hear it or not. I don’t hope that it will do any good. . . . I do not know whether, as you put it, your father has behaved dishonorably or not. I hope he has. . . . I hope he was Mrs. Soames’ lover in the days when love could have meant something to them. . . . Yes . . . something fleshly is exactly what I mean. . . . I think it would have been better. I think they might have been happy . . . really happy for a little time . . . not just living in a state of enchantment when one day is exactly like the next. . . . I think your father, of all men, has deserved that happiness. . . .” She sighed and added in a low voice, “There, now you know!”

For a long time he simply stood staring at the floor with the round, silly blue eyes which sometimes filled her with terror because they were so like the eyes of that old woman who never left the dark north wing and was known in the family simply as *she*, as if there was very little that was human left in her. At last he muttered through the drooping mustache, as if speaking to himself, “I can’t imagine what has happened to you.”

“Nothing,” said Olivia. “Nothing. I am the same as I have always been, only to-night I have come to the end of saying ‘yes, yes’ to everything, of always pretending, so that all of us here may go on living undisturbed in our dream . . . believing always that we are superior to every one else on the earth, that because we are rich we are powerful and righteous, that because . . . oh, there is no use in talking. . . . I am just the same as I have always been, only to-night I have spoken out. We all live in a dream here . . . a dream that some day will turn sharply into a nightmare. And then what

will we do? What will you do . . . and Aunt Cassie and all the rest?"

In her excitement her cheeks grew flushed and she stood up, very tall and beautiful, leaning against the mantelpiece; but her husband did not notice her. He appeared to be lost in deep thought, his face contorted with a kind of grim concentration.

"I know what has happened," he said presently. "It is Sabine. She should never have come back here. She was like that always . . . stirring up trouble . . . even as a little girl. She used to break up our games by saying: 'I won't play house. Who can be so foolish as to pretend muddy water is claret! It's a silly game.'"

"Do you mean that she is saying it again now . . . that it's a silly game to pretend muddy water is claret?"

He turned away without answering and began again to pace up and down over the enormous faded roses of the old Victorian carpet. "I don't know what you're driving at. All I know is that Sabine . . . Sabine . . . is an evil woman."

"Do you hate Sabine because she is a friend of mine?"

She had watched him for so many years disliking the people who were her friends, managing somehow to get rid of them, to keep her from seeing them, to force her into those endless dinners at the houses of the safe men he knew, the men who had gone to his college and belonged to his club, the men who would never do anything that was unexpected. And in the end she had always done as he wanted her to do. It was perhaps a manifestation of his resentment toward all those whom he could not understand and even (she thought) feared a little—the attitude of a man who will not allow others to enjoy what he could not take for himself. It was the first time she had ever spoken of this dog-in-the-manger game, but she found herself unable to keep silent. It was as if some power outside her had taken possession of her body.

She had a strange sensation of shame at the very moment she spoke, of shame at the sound of her own voice, a little strained and hysterical.

There was something preposterous, too, in the sight of Anson prancing up and down the old room filled with all the souvenirs of that decayed respectability in which he wrapped himself . . . prancing up and down with all his prejudices and superstitions bristling. And now Olivia had dragged the truth uncomfortably into the light.

"What an absurd thing to say!" he said bitterly.

Olivia sighed. "No, I don't think so. . . . I think you know exactly what I mean." (She knew the family game of pretending never to understand a truthful, unpleasant statement.)

But this, too, he refused to answer. Instead, he turned to her, more savage and excited than she had ever seen him, so moved that he seemed for a second to attain a pale flash of power and dignity. "And I don't like that Fiji Islander of a daughter of hers, who has been dragged all over the world and had her head filled with barbaric ideas."

At the sight of him and the sound of his voice Olivia experienced a sudden blinding flash of intuition that illuminated the whole train of their conversation, indeed, the whole procession of the years she had spent here at Pentlands or in the huge brownstone house in Beacon Street. She knew suddenly what it was that frightened Anson and Aunt Cassie and all that intricate world of family. They were terrified lest the walls, the very foundations, of their existence be swept away leaving them helpless with all their little prides and vanities exposed, stripped of all the laws and prejudices which they had made to protect them. It was why they hated O'Hara, an Irishman and a Roman Catholic. He had menaced their security. To be exposed thus would be a calamity, for in any other world save their own, in a world where

they stood unprotected by all that money laid away in solid trust funds, they would have no existence whatever. They would suddenly *be* what they *really* were.

She saw sharply, clearly, for the first time, and she said quietly, "I think you dislike Thérèse for reasons that are not fair to the girl. You distrust her because she is different from all the others . . . from the sort of girls that you were trained to believe perfect. Heaven knows there are enough of them about here . . . girls as like as peas in a pod."

"And what about this boy who is coming to stay with Sabine and her daughter . . . this American boy with a French name who has never seen his own country until now? I suppose he'll be as queer as all the others. Who knows anything about him?"

"Sabine," began Olivia.

"Sabine!" he interrupted. "Sabine! What does she care who he is or where he comes from? She's given up decent people long ago, when she went away from here and married that Levantine blackguard of a husband. Sabine! . . . Sabine would only like to bring trouble to us . . . the people to whom she belongs. She hates us. . . . She can barely speak to me in a civil fashion."

Olivia smiled quietly and tossed her cigarette into the ashes beneath the cold steel engraving of the Signing. "You are beginning to talk nonsense, Anson. Let's stick to facts, for once. I've met the boy in Paris. . . . Sybil knew him there. He is intelligent and handsome and treats women as if they were something more than stable-boys. There are still a few of us left who like to be treated thus . . . as women . . . a few of us even here in Durham. No, I don't imagine you'll care for him. He won't belong to your club or to your college, and he'll see life in a different way. He won't have had his opinions all ready made, waiting for him."

"It's my children I'm thinking of. . . . I don't want them picking up with any one, with the first person who comes along."

Olivia did not smile. She turned away now and said softly, "If it's Jack you're worrying about, you needn't fuss any longer. He won't marry Thérèse. I don't think you know how ill he is. . . . I don't think, sometimes, that you really know anything about him at all."

"I always talk with the doctors."

"Then you ought to know that they're silly . . . the things you're saying."

"All the same, Sabine ought never to have come back here. . . ."

She saw now that the talk was turning back into the inevitable channel of futility where they would go round and round, like squirrels in a cage, arriving nowhere. It had happened this way so many times. Turning with an air of putting an end to the discussion, she walked over to the fireplace . . . pale once more, with faint, mauve circles under her dark eyes. There was a fragility about her, as if this strange spirit which had flamed up so suddenly were too violent for the body.

"Anson," she said in a low voice, "please let's be sensible. I shall look into this affair of Sybil and O'Hara and try to discover whether there is anything serious going on. If necessary, I shall speak directly to both of them. I don't approve, either, but not for the same reason. He is too old for her. You won't have any trouble. You will have to do nothing. . . . As to Sabine, I shall continue to see as much of her as I like."

In the midst of the speech she had grown suddenly, perilously, calm in the way which sometimes alarmed her husband and Aunt Cassie. Sighing a little, she continued, "I have been good and gentle, Anson, for years and years, and now, to-

night . . . to-night I feel as if I were coming to the end of it. . . . I only say this to let you know that it can't go on forever."

Picking up her scarf, she did not wait for him to answer her, but moved away toward the door, still enveloped in the same perilous calm. In the doorway she turned. "I suppose we can call the affair settled for the moment?"

He had been standing there all the while watching her out of the round cold blue eyes with a look of astonishment as if after all those years he had seen his wife for the first time; and then slowly the look of astonishment melted into one of slyness, almost of hatred, as if he thought, "So this is what you really are! So you have been thinking these things all these years and have never belonged to us at all. You have been hating us all the while. You have always been an outsider—a common, vulgar outsider."

His thin, discontented lips had turned faintly gray, and when he spoke it was nervously, with a kind of desperation, like a small animal trapped in a corner. The words came out from the thin lips in a sharp, quick torrent, like the rush of white-hot steel released from a cauldron . . . words spoken in a voice that was cold and shaken with hatred.

"In any case," he said, "in any case . . . I will not have my daughter marry a shanty Irishman. . . . There is enough of that in the family."

For a moment Olivia leaned against the door-sill, her dark eyes wide with astonishment, as if she found it impossible to believe what she had heard. And then quietly, with a terrible sadness and serenity in her voice, she murmured almost to herself, "What a rotten thing to say!" And after a little pause, as if still speaking to herself, "So that is what you have been thinking for twenty years!" And again, "There is a terrible answer to that. . . . It's so terrible that I shan't say it, but

"I think you . . . you and Aunt Cassie know well enough what it is."

Closing the door quickly, she left him there, startled and exasperated, among all the Pentland souvenirs, and slowly, in a kind of nightmare, she made her way toward the stairs, past the long procession of Pentland ancestors—the shopkeeping immigrant, the witch-burner, the professional evangelist, the owner of clipper ships, and the tragic, beautiful Savina Pentland—and up the darkened stairway to the room where her husband had not followed her in more than fifteen years.

Once in her own room she closed the door softly and stood in the darkness, listening, listening, listening. . . . There was at first no sound save the blurred distant roar of the surf eating its way into the white dunes and the far-off howling of a beagle somewhere in the direction of the kennels, and then presently, there came to her the faint sound of soft, easy breathing from the adjoining room. It was regular, easy and quiet, almost as if her son had been as strong as O'Hara or Higgins or that vigorous young de Cyon whom she had met once for a little while at Sabine's house in Paris.

The sound filled her with a wild happiness, so that she forgot even what had happened in the drawing-room a little while before. As she undressed in the darkness she stopped now and then to listen again in a kind of fierce tension, as if by wishing it she could keep the sound from ever dying away. For more than three years she had never once entered this room free from the terror that there might only be silence to welcome her. And at last, after she had gone to bed and was falling asleep, she was wakened sharply by another sound, quite different, the sound of a wild, almost human cry . . . savage and wicked, and followed by the thud thud of hoofs beating savagely against the walls of a stall, and then the

voice of Higgins, the groom, cursing wickedly. She had heard it before—the sound of old John Pentland's evil, beautiful red mare kicking the walls of her stall and screaming wildly. There was an unearthly, implacable hatred between her and the little apelike man . . . and yet a sort of fascination, too.

As she sat up in her bed, listening, and still startled by the wild sound, she heard her son saying:

"Mama, are you there?"

"Yes."

She rose and went into the other room, where, in the dim light from the night-lamp, the boy was sitting up in bed, his pale blond hair all rumpled, his eyes wide open and staring a little.

"You're all right, Jack?" she whispered. "There's nothing the matter?"

"No—nothing. I had a bad dream and then I heard the red mare."

He looked pale and ill, with the blue veins showing on his temples; yet she knew that he was stronger than he had been for months. He was fifteen, and he looked younger than his age, rather like a boy of thirteen or fourteen, but he was old, too, in the timeless fashion of those who have always been ill.

"Is the party over? . . . Have they all gone?" he asked.

"Yes, Jack. . . . It's almost daylight. You'd better try to sleep again."

He lay down without answering her, and as she bent to kiss him good-night, she heard him say softly, "I wish I could have gone to the party."

"You will, Jack, some day—before very long. You're growing stronger every day."

Again a silence, while Olivia thought bitterly, "He knows that I'm lying. He knows that what I've said is not the truth."

Aloud she said, "You'll go to sleep now—like a good boy."

"I wish you'd tell me about the party."

Olivia sighed. "Then I must close Nannie's door, so we won't waken her." And she closed the door leading to the room where the old nurse slept, and seating herself on the foot of her son's bed, she began a recital of who had been at the ball, and what had happened there, bit by bit, carefully and with all the skill she was able to summon. She wanted to give him, who had so little chance of living, all the sense of life she was able to evoke.

She talked on and on, until presently she noticed that the boy had fallen asleep and that the sky beyond the marshes had begun to turn gray and rose and yellow with the rising day.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Olivia first came to the old house as the wife of Anson Pentland, the village of Durham, which lay inland from Pentlands and the sea, had been invisible, lying concealed in a fold of the land which marked the faint beginnings of the New Hampshire mountains. There had been in the view a certain sleepy peacefulness: one knew that in the distant fold of land surmounted by a single white spire there lay a quiet village of white wooden houses built along a single street called High Street that was dappled in summer with the shadows of old elm-trees. In those days it had been a country village, half asleep, with empty shuttered houses here and there falling into slow decay—a village with fewer people in it than there had been a hundred years before. It had stayed thus sleeping for nearly seventy-five years, since the day when a great migration of citizens had robbed it of its sturdiest young people. In the thick grass that surrounded the old meeting-house there lay a marble slab recording the event with an inscription which read:

FROM THIS SPOT ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST, EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN, THE REVEREND JOSIAH MILFORD, PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH, WITH ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY MEMBERS OF HIS CONGREGATION—MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN—SET OUT, SECURE IN THEIR FAITH IN ALMIGHTY GOD, TO ESTABLISH HIS WILL AND POWER IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE WESTERN RESERVE.

Beneath the inscription were cut the names of those families who had made the journey to found a new town which had since surpassed sleepy Durham a hundred times in wealth and prosperity. There was no Pentland name among them, for the Pentlands had been rich even in the year eighteen hundred and eighteen, and lived in winter in Boston and in summer at Durham, on the land claimed from the wilderness by the first of the family.

From that day until the mills came to Durham the village sank slowly into a kind of lethargy, and the church itself, robbed of its strength, died presently and was changed into a dusty museum filled with homely early American furniture and spinning-wheels—a place seldom visited by any one and painted grudgingly every five years by the town council because it was popularly considered an historical monument. The Pentland family long ago had filtered away into the cold faith of the Unitarians or the more compromising and easy creeds of the Episcopal church.

But now, nearly twenty years after Olivia had come to Pentlands, the village was alive again, so alive that it had overflowed its little fold in the land and was streaming down the hill on the side next to the sea in straight, plain columns of ugly stucco bungalows, each filled with its little family of Polish mill-workers. And in the town, across High Street from the white-spired old meeting-house, there stood a new church, built of stucco and green-painted wood and dedicated to the great Church of Rome. In the old wooden houses along High Street there still lingered remnants of the old families . . . old Mrs. Featherstone, who did washing to support four sickly grandchildren who ought never to have been born; Miss Haddon, a queer old woman who wore a black cape and lived on a dole from old John Pentland as a remote cousin of the family; Harry Peckhan, the village carpenter; old Mrs. Malson, living alone in a damp, gaunt and

beautiful old house filled with bits of jade and ivory brought back from China by her grandfather's clippers; Miss Murgatroyd, who had long since turned her bullfinch house into a shabby tea-room. They remained here and there, a few worn and shabby-genteel descendants of those first settlers who had come into the country with the Pentlands.

But the mills had changed everything, the mills which poured wealth into the pockets of a dozen rich families who lived in summer within a few miles of Durham.

Even the countryside itself had changed. There were no longer any of the old New Englanders in possession of the land. Sometimes in riding along the lanes one encountered a thin, silly-faced remnant of the race sitting on a stone wall chewing a bit of grass; but that was all: the others had been swallowed up long ago in the mills of Salem and Lynn or died away, from too much inbreeding and too little nourishment. The few farms that remained fell into the hands of Poles and Czechs, solid, square people who were a little pagan in their closeness to the earth and the animals which surrounded them, sturdy people, not too moral, who wrought wonders with the barren, stony earth of New England and stood behind their walls staring wide-eyed while the grand people like the Pentlands rode by in pink coats surrounded by the waving nervous tails of foxhounds. And, one by one, other old farms were being turned back into a wilderness once more so that there would be plenty of room for the horses and hounds to run after foxes and bags of aniseed.

It had all changed enormously. From the upper windows of the big Georgian brick house where the Pentlands lived, one could see the record of all the changes. The windows commanded a wide view of a landscape composed of grubby meadows and stone walls, thickets of pine and white birches, marshes, and a winding sluggish brown river. Sometimes in the late autumn the deer wandered down from the mountains

of New Hampshire to spoil the fox-hunting by leading the hounds astray after game that was far too fleet for them.

And nearer at hand, nestled within a turn of the river, lay the land where Sabine Callender had been born and had lived until she was a grown woman—the land which she had sold carelessly to O'Hara, an Irish politician and a Roman Catholic, come up from nowhere to take possession of it, to clip its hedges, repair its sagging walls, paint its old buildings and put up gates and fences that were too shiny and new. Indeed, he had done it so thoroughly and so well that the whole place had a little the air of a suburban real estate development. And now Sabine had returned to spend the summer in one of his houses and to be very friendly with him in the face of Aunt Cassie and Anson Pentland, and a score of others like them.

Olivia knew this wide and somberly beautiful landscape, every stick and stone of it, from the perilous gravel-pit, half-hidden by its fringe of elder-bushes, to the black pine copse where Higgins had discovered only a day or two before a new litter of foxes. She knew it on gray days when it was cold and depressing, on those bright, terribly clear New England days when every twig and leaf seemed outlined by light, and on those damp, cold days when a gray fog swept in across the marshes from the sea to envelop all the countryside in gray darkness. It was a hard, uncompromising, stony country that was never too cheerful.

It was a country, too, which gave her an old feeling of loneliness . . . a feeling which, strangely enough, seemed to increase rather than diminish as the years passed. She had never accustomed herself to its occasional dreariness. In the beginning, a long while ago, it had seemed to her green and peaceful and full of quiet, a place where she might find rest and peace . . . but she had come long since to see it as it was, as Sabine had seen it while she stood in the window of the writing-room, frightened by the sudden queer apparition

of the little groom—a country beautiful, hard and cold, and a little barren.

2

There were times when the memories of Olivia's youth seemed to sharpen suddenly and sweep in upon her, overwhelming all sense of the present, times when she wanted suddenly and fiercely to step back into that far-off past which had seemed then an unhappy thing; and these were the times when she felt most lonely, the times when she knew how completely, with the passing of years, she had drawn into herself; it was a process of protection like a tortoise drawing in its head. And all the while, in spite of the smiles and the politeness and the too facile amiability, she felt that she was really a stranger at Pentlands, that there were certain walls and barriers which she could never break down, past which she could never penetrate, certain faiths in which it was impossible for her to believe.

It was difficult now for her to remember very clearly what had happened before she came to Durham; it all seemed lost, confused, buried beneath the weight of her devotion to the vast family monument of the Pentlands. She had forgotten the names of people and places and confused the days and the years. At times it was difficult for her to remember the endless confusing voyages back and forth across the Atlantic and the vast, impersonal, vacuous hotels which had followed each other in the bleak and unreal procession of her childhood.

She could remember with a certain pitiful clarity two happy years spent at the school in Saint-Cloud, where for months at a time she had lived in a single room which she might call her own, where she had rested, free from the terror of hearing her mother say, "We must pack to-day. We

are leaving to-morrow for St. Petersburg or London or San Remo or Cairo. . . .”

She could scarcely remember at all the immense house of chocolate-colored stone fitted with fantastic turrets and balconies that overlooked Lake Michigan. It had been sold and torn down long ago, destroyed like all else that belonged to the far-off past. She could not remember the father who had died when she was three; but of him there remained at least a yellowing photograph of a great, handsome, brawny man with a humorous Scotch-Irish face, who had died at the moment when his name was coming to be known everywhere as a power in Washington. No, nothing remained of him save the old photograph, and the tenuous, mocking little smile which had come down to her, the way she had of saying, “Yes! Yes!” pleasantly when she meant to act in quite the contrary fashion.

There were times when the memory of her own mother became vague and fantastic, as if she had been no more than a figure out of some absurd photograph of the early nineteen hundreds . . . the figure of a pretty woman, dressed fashionably in clothes that flowed away in both directions, from a wasp waist. It was like a figure out of one of those old photographs which one views with a kind of melancholy amusement. She remembered a vain, rather selfish and pretty woman, fond of flattery, who had been shrewd enough never to marry any one of those gallant dark gentlemen with high-sounding titles who came to call at the eternal changeless hotel sitting-room, to take her out to garden parties and fêtes and races. And always in the background of the memory there was the figure of a dark little girl, overflowing with spirits and a hunger for friends, who was left behind to amuse herself by walking out with the Swiss governess, to make friends among the children she encountered in the parks or on the beaches and the boulevards of whatever Euro-

pean city her mother was visiting at the moment . . . friends whom she saw to-day and who were vanished to-morrow never to be seen again. Her mother, she saw now, belonged to the America of the nineties. She saw her now less as a real person than a character out of a novel by Mrs. Wharton.

But she had never remarried; she had remained the rich, pretty Mrs. McConnel of Chicago until that tragic day (the clearest of all Olivia's memories and the most terrible) when she had died of fever abruptly in a remote and squalid Italian village, with only her daughter (a girl of seventeen), a quack doctor and the Russian driver of her motor to care for her.

The procession of confused and not-too-cheerful memories came to a climax in a gloomy, red brick house off Washington Square, where she had gone as an orphan to live with a rigid, bejetted, maternal aunt who had believed that the whole world revolved about Lenox, the Hudson River Valley and Washington Square—an aunt who had never spoken to Olivia's father because she, like Anson and Aunt Cassie, had a prejudice against Irishmen who appeared out of nowhere, engaging, full of life and high spirits.

So at eighteen she had found herself alone in the world save for one bejetted aunt, with no friends save those she had picked up as a child on beaches and promenades, whose names she could no longer even remember. And the only fixed world she knew was the world of the aunt who talked incessantly of the plush, camphor-smelling splendor of a New York which no longer existed.

Olivia saw it all clearly now. She saw why it was that when Anson Pentland came one night to call upon her aunt she had thought him an elegant and fascinating man whose presence at dinner had the power of transforming the solid walnut and mahogany dining-room into a brilliant place. He was what girls called "an older man," and he had flattered her by his politeness and attentions. He had even taken her

chaperoned by the aunt, to see a performance of "The City," little knowing that the indecorousness to be unfolded there would force them to leave before the play was over. They had gone on a Thursday evening (she could even remember the very day) and she still smiled at the memory of their belief that a girl who had spent all her life in the corridors of European hotels should not know what the play was about.

And then it had all ended by her being asked to Pentlands for a visit . . . to Pentlands, where she had come upon a world such as she had never known before, a world green and peaceful and secure, where every one was elaborately kind to her for reasons that she never learned until long afterward. They never even told her the truth about Anson's mother, the old woman who lived in solitude in the north wing. She was, they said, too ill at the moment to see any one. Pentlands, in that far-off day, had seemed to the tired, friendless girl like some vast, soft green bed where she could fling herself down and rest forever, a world where she could make friends and send down roots that would hold her secure for all time. To a hotel child Pentlands was a paradise; so when Anson Pentland asked her to marry him, she accepted him because she did not find him actually repulsive.

And now, after all those years, it was spring again . . . spring as when she had come to Pentlands for the first time, and she was thirty-nine years old and still young; only everything had changed.

Bit by bit, in the years that followed the birth of Sybil and then of Jack, the whole picture of the life at Pentlands and in the brownstone house on Beacon Street had come to assume a pattern, to take form out of the first confused and misty impressions, so that, looking back upon it, she was beginning to understand it all with the chill clarity of disillusion.

She saw herself as a shy young girl to whom they had all been elaborately kind because it was so necessary for Anson to have a wife and produce an heir. . . . Anson, the last male descendant of such a glorious family. ("The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.") She saw herself as they must have seen her . . . a pretty young girl, disarmed by their kindness, who was not known in their world but was at least charming and a lady and quite rich. (She knew now how much the money must have counted with Aunt Cassie.) And she saw Anson now, across all the expanse of years, not as a Prince Charming come to rescue her from an ogre aunt, but as he had really been . . . a rather anemic man, past thirty, of an appalling propriety. (There was a bitter humor in the memories of his timid advances toward her, of all the distaste with which he approached the details of marriage . . . a humor which she had come to understand fully only as she grew older and wiser in the ways of the world.) Looking back, she saw him as a man who had tried again and again to marry young women he had known all his life and who had failed because somehow he had gained a mysterious reputation for being a bore . . . a young man who, left to himself, would never have approached any woman, and gone to the grave as virginal as he had been born.

She saw now that he had never been even in the slightest in love with her. He had married her only because he got no peace from all the others, both the living and the dead, who in such a strange fashion seemed also to live at Pentlands. It was Aunt Cassie and even poor silly Miss Peavey and powerful old John Pentland and the cousins and all those dead hanging in neat rows in the hall who had married her. Anson had only been an instrument; and even in the most bitter moments she felt strangely sorry for him, because he, too, had had all his life ruined.

And so, slowly during all those long years, the pretty, shy,

unknown Olivia McConnel, whose father was a Democratic politician out of Chicago, had turned into this puzzled, sometimes unhappy woman, the outsider, who had come in some mysterious fashion to be the one upon whom all of them leaned for strength.

She was glad now that she had stood forth boldly at last and faced Anson and all those who stood behind him there in the drawing-room, both the living and the dead, peering over his shoulder, urging him on. The unpleasant argument, though it had wounded her, had cleared the air a little. It had laid bare for a second the reality which she had been seeking for so long a time. Anson had been right about Sabine: in the clear bright air of the New England morning she knew that it was the sense of Sabine's nearness which had given her the strength to be unpleasant. Sabine, like herself, had known the great world, and so she was able to see their world here in Durham with a clarity that the others never approached. She was strong, too, in her knowledge that whatever happened she (Olivia) was the one person whom they could not afford to lose, because they had depended on her for too long.

But she was hurt. She kept thinking again and again of what Anson had said. . . . *"In any case, I will not have my daughter marry a shanty Irishman. There is enough of that in the family."*

She knew that Anson would suffer from shame for what he had said, but she knew, too, that he would pretend nothing had happened, that he had never made such a speech, because it was unworthy of a gentleman and a Pentland. He would pretend, as he always did, that the scene had never occurred.

When he had made the speech he had meant that she ought to have been thankful that they allowed her to marry into

the Pentland family. There was a buried something in them all, a conviction that was a part of their very flesh, which made them believe in such a privilege. And for her who knew so much more than the world knew, who saw so much more than any of them of the truth, there was only one answer, to be wrung from her with a tragic intensity . . . "Oh, my God! . . ."

3

The dining-room was large and square, and having been redecorated in a period later than the rest of the house, was done in heavy mahogany, with a vast shiny table in the center which when reduced to its smallest possible circumference still left those who seated themselves about it formally remote from one another.

It was a well-used table, for since circumstance had kept John Pentland from going into the world, he had brought a part of it into his own home with a hospitality and a warmth that rather upset his sister Cassie. She, herself, like most of the family, had never cared very profoundly for food, looking upon it almost as a necessity. A prune to her palate shared importance as a delicacy with a truffle. In the secrecy of her own house, moved by her passion for economy, she more often than not assuaged her own birdlike appetite with scraps from the cupboard, though at such times the simple but full-blooded Miss Peavey suffered keenly. "A pick-up meal" was a byword with Aunt Cassie, and so she frowned upon the rich food furnished by old John Pentland and his daughter-in-law, Olivia.

Nevertheless, she took a great many meals at the mahogany table and even managed to insinuate within its circle the plump figure of Miss Peavey, whose silly laugh and servile echoes of his sister's opinions the old man detested.

Anson never lunched at home, for he went up to Boston

each morning at nine o'clock, like a man of affairs, with much business to care for. He kept an office in Water Street and went to it with a passionate regularity, to spend the day in the petty affairs of club committees and societies for the improvement of this or that; for he was a man who fortified his own soul by arranging the lives of others. He was chairman of a committee which "aired" young girls who had fallen into trouble, and contributed as much as he was able out of his own rather slender income to the activities of the Watch and Ward Society. And a large part of the day was spent in correspondence with genealogists on the subject of "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony." He did not in a whole year earn enough money to pay the office rent for one month, but he had no patience with the many cases of poverty and destitution which came to his notice. The stocks and bonds of the Pentland estate had been kept carefully out of his reach, by a father who distrusted activities such as Anson's, and even now, when he was nearly fifty, Anson had only a small income left by his grandfather and an allowance, paid him each month by his father, as if he were still a boy in college.

So when Olivia came down to lunch on the day after the ball she was not forced to face Anson and his shame over the scene of the night before. There were only the grandfather and Sybil and Jack—who was well enough to come down.

The old man sat at the head, in the place which he had never relinquished as the dictator, the ruler of all the family. Tall and muscular, he had grown leathery from exposure during the years he had lived in the country, riding day after day in rains and blizzards, in sunlight and in storms, as if there were in him some atavistic hunger for the hardy life led by the first Pentlands to come to Durham. He always rode the vicious and unruly beautiful red mare . . . a grim old man who was a match for her famous bad temper. He was

rather like his sister Cassie in appearance—one of the black Pentlands who had appeared mysteriously in the line nearly a hundred years earlier, and he had burning black eyes that looked out from shaggy brows . . . a man as different in appearance and vigor from his son as it was possible to imagine. (For Anson was a typical Pentland—blond, with round blue eyes and an inclination when in health toward ruddiness.) One stood in awe of the old man: there was a grimness about the strong, rough-cut face and contracted lips, and a curious, indefinable air of disapproval which one was never able to pin down or analyze.

He was silent to-day, in one of the black moods which Olivia knew well meant that he was troubled. She knew that this time it had nothing to do with Jack's illness, for the boy sat there opposite them, looking stronger than he had looked in months . . . blond and pale and thin, with the blue veins showing at his pathetic wrists and on his thin, handsome temples.

Olivia had lived through bad times over Jack and she had lived through them always together with John Pentland, so there had grown up between them—the mother and the grandfather—a sense of understanding which was quite beyond speech. Together they had spent so many nights by the side of the boy, keeping him alive almost by the strength of their united wills, forcing him to live when, gasping for life, he would have slipped away easily into death. Together they had kept him in life, because they both loved him and because he was the last son of the family.

Olivia felt sometimes that Sybil, too, played a part in the never-ending struggle against death. The girl, like her grandfather, never spoke of such things, but one could read them in the troubled depths of her violet eyes. That long, weary struggle was one of the tragedies they never spoke of at Pentlands, leaving it buried in silence. One said, "Jack looks

well to-day," smiling, and, "Perhaps the doctors are wrong." Sybil was watching her brother now, in that quiet, mysterious way she had, watching him cautiously lest he discover that she was watching; for he discovered troubles easily, with the kind of clairvoyance which comes to people who have always been ill.

They barely talked at all during the lunch. Sybil planned to take her brother in the trap to ride over the farm and down to the white dunes.

"Higgins is going with us," she said. "He's going to show us the new litter of foxes in the black thicket."

And Jack said, "It's a funny thing about Higgins. He always discovers such things before any one else. He knows when it will be a good day for fishing and just when it is going to rain. He's never wrong."

"No . . ." said the grandfather suddenly. "It's a funny thing. He's never wrong . . . not in all the years I've known him."

It was the only time he said anything during the meal, and Olivia, trying to fill in the gaps in the conversation, found it difficult, with the boy sitting opposite her looking so pale and ill. It seemed to her sometimes that he had never really been born, that he had always remained in some way a part of herself. When he was out of her sight, she had no peace because there was always a gnawing terror that she might never see him again. And she knew that deep inside the frail body there was a spirit, a flame, descended from the old man and from herself, which burned passionately with a desire for life, for riding, for swimming, for running across the open meadows . . . a flame that must always be smothered. If only he had been like Anson, his father, who never knew that hunger for life. . . .

"Olivia, my dear . . ." The old man was speaking.

"Will you have your coffee with me in the library? There is something I want to discuss with you."

She knew it then. She had been right. There *was* something which troubled him. He always said the same thing when he was faced by some problem too heavy for his old shoulders. He always said, "Olivia, my dear. . . . Will you come into the library?" He never summoned his own son, or his sister Cassie . . . no one but Olivia. Between them they shared secrets which the others never dreamed of; and when he died, all the troubles would be hers . . . they would be passed on for her to deal with . . . those troubles which existed in a family which the world would have said was rich and respected and quite without troubles.

4

As she left the room to follow him she stopped for a moment to say to Sybil, "Are you happy, my dear? You're not sorry that you aren't going back to school in Saint-Cloud?"

"No, Mama; why shouldn't I be happy here? I love it, more than anything in the world."

The girl thrust her hands into the pockets of her riding-coat.

"You don't think I was wrong to send you to France to school . . . away from every one here?"

Sybil laughed and looked at her mother in the frank, half-mocking way she had when she fancied she had uncovered a plot.

"Are you worrying about marrying me off? I'm only eighteen. I've lots of time."

"I'm worrying because I think you'll be so hard to please."

Again she laughed. "That's true. That's why I'm going to take my time."

"And you're glad to have Thérèse here?"

"Of course. You know I like Thérèse awfully, Mama."

"Very well . . . run along now. I must speak to your grandfather."

And the girl went out onto the terrace where Jack stood waiting in the sun for the trap. He always followed the sun, choosing to sit in it even in midsummer, as if he were never quite warm enough.

She *was* worried over Sybil. She had begun to think that perhaps Aunt Cassie was right when she said that Sybil ought to go to a boarding-school with the girls she had always known, to grow loud and noisy and awkward and play hockey and exchange silly notes with the boys in the boarding-school in the next village. Perhaps it was wrong to have sent Sybil away to a school where she would meet girls from France and England and Russia and South America . . . half the countries of the world; a school where, as Aunt Cassie had said bitterly, she would be forced to associate with the "daughters of dancers and opera singers." She knew now that Sybil hadn't liked the ball any more than Thérèse, who had run away from it without a word of explanation. Only with Thérèse it didn't matter so much, because the dark stubborn head was filled with all sorts of wild notions about science and painting and weird books on psychology. There was a loneliness about Thérèse and her mother, Sabine Callendar, only with them it didn't matter. They had, too, a hardness, a sense of derision and scorn which protected them. Sybil hadn't any such protections. Perhaps she was even wrong in having made of Sybil a lady—a lady in the old sense of the word—because there seemed to be no place for a lady in the scheme of life as it had existed at the dance the night before. It was perilous, having a lady on one's hands, especially a lady who was certain to take life as passionately as Sybil.

She wanted the girl to be happy, without quite understand-

ing that it was because Sybil seemed the girl she had once been herself, a very part of herself, the part which had never lived at all.

She found her father-in-law seated at his great mahogany desk in the high narrow room walled with books which was kept sacred to him, at the desk from which he managed the farm and watched over a fortune, built up bit by bit shrewdly, thriftily over three hundred years, a fortune which he had never brought himself to trust in the hands of his son. It was, in its gloomy, cold way, a pleasant room, smelling of dogs and apples and wood-smoke, and sometimes of whisky, for it was here that the old man retired when, in a kind of baffled frenzy, he drank himself to insensibility. It was here that he would sometimes sit for a day and a night, even sleeping in his leather chair, refusing to see any one save Higgins, who watched over him, and Olivia. And so it was Olivia and Higgins who alone knew the spectacle of this solitary drinking. The world and even the family knew very little of it—only the little which sometimes leaked out from the gossip of servants straying at night along the dark lanes and hedges about Durham.

He sat with his coffee and a glass of Courvoisier before him while he smoked, with an air of being lost in some profound worry, for he did not look up at once when she entered, but sat staring before him in an odd, enchanted fashion. It was not until she had taken a cigarette from the silver box and lighted it that he looked up at the sound of the striking match and, focusing the burning black eyes, said to her, "Jack seems very well to-day."

"Yes, better than he has been in a long time."

"Perhaps, after all, the doctors are wrong."

Olivia sighed and said quietly, "If we had believed the doctors we should have lost him long ago."

"Yes, that's true."

She poured her coffee and he murmured, "It's about Horace Pentland I wanted to speak. He's dead. I got the news this morning. He died in Mentone and now it's a question whether we shall bring him home here to be buried in Durham with the rest of the family."

Olivia was silent for a moment and then, looking up, said, "What do you think? How long has it been that he has lived in Mentone?"

"It's nearly thirty years now that I've been sending him money to stay there. He's only a cousin. Still, we had the same grandfather and he'd be the first of the family in three hundred years who isn't buried here."

"There was Savina Pentland. . . ."

"Yes. . . . But she's buried out there, and she would have been buried here if it had been possible."

And he made a gesture in the direction of the sea, beyond the marshes where the beautiful Savina Pentland, almost a legend now, lay, somewhere deep down in the soft white sand at the bottom of the ocean.

"Would he want to be buried here?" asked Olivia.

"He wrote and asked me . . . a month or two before he died. It seemed to be on his mind. He put it in a strange way. He wrote that he wanted to come home."

Again Olivia was thoughtful for a time. "Strange . . ." she murmured presently, "when people were so cruel to him."

The lips of the old man stiffened a little.

"It was his own fault. . . ."

"Still . . . thirty years is a long time."

He knocked the ash from his cigar and looked at her sharply. "You mean that everything may have been forgotten by now?"

Olivia made a little gesture with her white, ringless hands. "Why not?"

"Because people don't forget things like that . . . not in our world, at any rate."

Quietly, far back in her mind, Olivia kept trying to imagine this Horace Pentland whom she had never seen, this shadowy old man, dead now, who had been exiled for thirty years.

"You have no reason for not wanting him here among all the others?"

"No . . . Horace is dead now. . . . It can't matter much whether what's left of him is buried here or in France."

"Except, of course, that they may have been kinder to him over there. . . . They're not so harsh."

A silence fell over them, as if in some way the spirit of Horace Pentland, the sinner whose name was never spoken in the family save between Olivia and the old man, had returned and stood between them, waiting to hear what was to be done with all that remained of him on this earth. It was one of those silences which, descending upon the old house, sometimes filled Olivia with a vague uneasiness. They had a way of descending upon the household in the long evenings when all the family sat reading in the old drawing-room—as if there were figures unseen who stood watching.

"If he wanted to be buried here," said Olivia, "I can see no reason why he should not be."

"Cassie will object to raking up an old scandal that has been forgotten."

"Surely that can't matter now . . . when the poor old man is dead. We can be kind to him now . . . surely we can be kind to him now."

John Pentland sighed abruptly, a curious, heart-breaking sigh that seemed to have escaped even his power of steely control; and presently he said, "I think you are right, Olivia.

. . . I will do as you say . . . only we'll keep it a secret between us until the time comes when it's necessary to speak. And then . . . then we'll have a quiet funeral."

She would have left him then save that she knew from his manner that there were other things he wanted to say. He had a way of letting you know his will without speaking. Somehow, in his presence you felt that it was impossible to leave until he had dismissed you. He still treated his own son, who was nearly fifty, as if he were a little boy.

Olivia waited, busying herself by rearranging the late lilacs which stood in a tall silver vase on the polished mahogany desk.

"They smell good," he said abruptly. "They're the last, aren't they?"

"The last until next spring."

"Next spring . . ." he repeated with an air of speaking to himself. "Next spring. . . ." And then abruptly, "The other thing was about Sabine. The nurse tells me *she* has discovered that Sabine is here." He made the family gesture toward the old north wing. "She has asked to see Sabine."

"Who told her that Sabine had returned? How could she have discovered it?"

"The nurse doesn't know. She must have heard some one speaking the name under her window. The nurse says that people in her condition have curious ways of discovering such things . . . like a sixth sense."

"Do you want me to ask Sabine? She'd come if I asked her."

"It would be unpleasant. Besides, I think it might do harm in some way."

Olivia was silent for a moment. "How? She probably wouldn't remember Sabine. When she saw her last, Sabine was a young girl."

"She's gotten the idea now that we're all against her, that we're persecuting her in some way." He coughed and blew

a cloud of smoke out of his thin-drawn lips. "It's difficult to explain what I mean. . . . I mean that Sabine might encourage that feeling . . . quite without meaning to, that Sabine might give her the impression that she was an ally. There's something disturbing about Sabine."

"Anson thinks so, too," said Olivia softly. "He's been talking to me about it."

"She ought never to have come back here. It's difficult . . . what I am trying to say. Only I feel that she's up to some mischief. I think she hates us all."

"Not all of us. . . ."

"Not perhaps you. You never belonged here. It's only those of us who have always been here."

"But she's fond of you. . . ."

"Her father and I were good friends. He was very like her . . . disagreeable and given to speaking unpleasant truths. . . . He wasn't a popular man. Perhaps that's why she's friendly toward me . . . on account of him."

"No, it's more than that. . . ."

Slowly Olivia felt herself slipping back into that state of confused enchantment which had overwhelmed her more and more often of late. It seemed that life grew more and more tenuous and complicated, more blurred and indistinct, until at times it became simply a morass of minute problems in which she found herself mired and unable to act. No one spoke directly any more. It was like living in a world of shadows. And this old man, her father-in-law, was the greatest puzzle of all, because it was impossible ever to know how much he understood of what went on about him, how much he chose to ignore in the belief that by denying its existence it would cease to exist.

Sitting there, puzzled, she began to pull a leaf from the cluster of lilacs into tiny bits.

"Sometimes," she said, "I think Sabine is unhappy. . . ."

"No . . . not that. . . She's beyond happiness or unhappiness. There's something hard in her and unrelenting . . . as hard as a cut diamond. She's a clever woman and a queer one. She's one of those strange creatures that are thrown off now and then by people like us. There's nothing else quite like them in the world. They go to strange extremes. Horace was the same . . . in a different, less creditable fashion."

Olivia looked at him suddenly, astonished by the sudden flash of penetration in the old man, one of those sudden, quick gleams which led her to believe that far down, in the depths of his soul, he was far more profound, far more intelligent, unruly and defiant of tradition than he ever allowed the world to suppose. It was always the old question. How much did he know? How much did he not know . . . far back, behind the lined, severe, leathery old face? Or was it a sort of clairvoyance, not of eternal illness, like Jack's, but of old age?

"I shall ask Sabine," she began.

"It's not necessary at the moment. She appears to have forgotten the matter temporarily. But she'll remember it again and then I think it will be best to humor her, whatever comes. She may not think of it again for months . . . until Sabine has gone. . . . I only wanted to ask you . . . to consult you, Olivia. I thought you could arrange it."

She rose and, turning to go, she heard him saying, "*She* might like some lilacs in her room." He hesitated and in a flat, dead voice, added, "She used to be very fond of flowers."

Olivia, avoiding the dark eyes, thought, "She used to be very fond of flowers. . . . That means forty years ago . . . forty long years. Oh, my God!" But after a second she said simply, "She has taken a dislike to flowers. She fancies they take up the air and stifle her. The sight of them is very bad for her."

"I should have known you'd already thought of it."

For an instant the old man stood facing her with a fixed and searching expression which made her feel shy and led her to turn away from him a little; and then all at once, with an air strangely timid and frightened in a man so grim in appearance, he took her hand and kissing her on the forehead murmured, "You're a good girl, Olivia. They're right in what they say of you. You're a good girl. I don't know how I should have managed without you all these years."

Smiling, she looked at him, and then, touching his hand affectionately, she went out without speaking again, thinking, as she had thought a thousand times, what a terrible thing it must be to have been born so inarticulate and so terrified of feeling as John Pentland. It must be, she thought, like living forever imprisoned in a shell of steel from which one might look out and see friends but never touch or know them.

From the doorway she heard a voice behind her, saying almost joyfully: "The doctors must have been wrong about Jack. You and I together, Olivia, have defeated them."

She said, "Yes," and smiled at him, but when she had turned away again there was in her mind a strange, almost gruesome thought.

"If only Jack lives until his grandfather is dead, the old man will die happy. If only he can be kept alive until then. . . ."

She had a strange way of seeing things in the hard light of reality, and an unreal, lonely childhood had fostered the trait. She had been born thus, and now as a woman she found that in a way it was less a curse than a blessing. In a world which survived only by deceiving itself, she found that seeing the truth and knowing it made her strong. Here, perhaps, lay the reason why all of them had come to depend upon her. But there were times, too, when she wanted pas-

sionately to be a poor weak feminine creature, a woman who might turn to her husband and find in him some one stronger than herself. She had a curious feeling of envy for Savina Pentland, who was dead before she was born. . . . Savina Pentland who had been the beauty of the family, extravagant, reckless, feminine, who bought strings of pearls and was given to weeping and fainting.

But she (Olivia) had only Anson to lean upon.

After she had gone away the old man sat for a long time smoking and drinking his brandy, enveloped by a loneliness scarcely more profound than it had been a little while before when he sat talking with Olivia. It was his habit to sit thus sometimes for an hour at a time, unconscious, it seemed, of all the world about him; Olivia had come in more than once at such moments and gone away again, unwilling to shatter the enchantment by so much as a single word.

At last, when the cigar had burned to an end, he crushed out the ember with a short, fierce gesture and, rising, went out of the tall narrow room and along the corridor that led to the dark stairway in the old north wing. These steps he had climbed every day since it had become necessary to keep *her* in the country the year round . . . every day, at the same hour, step by step his big heavy-shod boots had trod the same worn stair carpet. It was a journey begun years ago as a kind of pleasure colored by hope, which for a long time now, bereft of all hope, had become merely a monotonous dreary duty. It was like a journey of penance made by some pilgrim on his knees up endless flights of stairs.

For more than twenty years, as far back as Olivia could remember, he had been absent from the house for a night but twice, and then only on occasions of life and death. In all that time he had been twice to New York and never once

to the Europe he had not seen since, as a boy, he had made the grand tour on a plan laid out by old General Curtis . . . a time so remote now that it must have seemed part of another life. In all those years he had never once escaped from the world which his family found so perfect and complete and which to him must have seemed always a little cramped and inadequate. Fate and blood and circumstance, one might have said, had worn him down bit by bit until in the end he had come to worship the same gods they worshiped. Now and then he contrived to escape them for a little while by drinking himself into insensibility, but always he awakened again to find that nothing had changed, to discover that his prison was the same. And so, slowly, hope must have died.

But no one knew, even Olivia, whether he was happy or unhappy; and no one would ever really know what had happened to him, deep inside, behind the gray, leathery old face.

The world said, when it thought of him: "There never was such a devoted husband as John Pentland."

Slowly and firmly he walked along the narrow hall to the end and there halted to knock on the white door. He always knocked, for there were times when the sight of him, entering suddenly, affected her so that she became hysterical and beyond all control.

In response to the knock, the door was opened gently and professionally by Miss Egan, an automaton of a nurse—neat, efficient, inhuman and incredibly starched, whose very smile seemed to come and go by some mechanical process, like the sounds made by squeezing a mechanical doll. Only it was impossible to imagine squeezing anything so starched and jagged as the red-faced Miss Egan. It was a smile which sprang into existence upon sight of any member of the family, a smile of false humility which said, "I know very well that you cannot do without me"—the smile of a woman well enough content to be paid three times the wages of an ordi-

nary nurse. In three or four more years she would have enough saved to start a sanatorium of her own.

Fixing her smile, she faced the old man, saying, "She seems quite well to-day . . . very quiet."

The whole hallway had been flooded at the opening of the door by a thick and complicated odor arising from innumerable medicines that stood row upon row in the obscurity of the dark room. The old man stepped inside, closing the door quickly behind him, for she was affected by too much light. She could not bear to have a door or a window open near her; even on this bright day the drawn shades kept the room in darkness.

She had got the idea somehow that there were people outside who waited to leer at her . . . hundreds of them all pressing their faces against the panes to peep into her bedroom. There were days when she could not be quieted until the window-shades were covered by thick layers of black cloth. She would not rise from her bed until nightfall lest the faces outside might see her standing there in her nightdress.

It was only when darkness had fallen that the nurse was able by means of trickery and wheedling to air the room, and so it smelled horribly of the medicines she never took, but kept ranged about her, row upon row, like the fetishes of witch-doctors. In this they humored her as they had humored her in shutting out the sunlight, because it was the only way they could keep her quiet and avoid sending her away to some place where she would have been shut behind bars. And this John Pentland would not even consider.

When he entered she was lying in the bed, her thin, frail body barely outlined beneath the bedclothes . . . the mere shadow of a woman who must once have been pretty in a delicate way. But nothing remained now of the beauty save the fine modeling of the chin and nose and brow. She lay there, a queer, unreal old woman, with thin white hair, skin

like parchment and a silly, vacant face as unwrinkled as that of a child. As he seated himself beside her, the empty, round blue eyes opened a little and stared at him without any sign of recognition. He took one of the thin, blue-veined hands in his, but it only lay there, lifeless, while he sat, silent and gentle, watching her.

Once he spoke, calling her wistfully by name, "Agnes"; but there was no sign of an answer, not so much as a faint flickering of the white, transparent lids.

And so for an eternity he sat thus in the thick darkness, enveloped by the sickly odor of medicines, until he was roused by a knock at the door and the sudden glare of daylight as it opened and Miss Egan, fixing her flashing and teathy smile, came in and said: "The fifteen minutes is up, Mr. Pentland."

When the door had closed behind him he went away again, slowly, thoughtfully, down the worn stairs and out into the painfully brilliant sunlight of the bright New England spring. Crossing the green terrace, bordered with great clumps of iris and peonies and a few late tulips, he made his way to the stable-yard, where Higgins had left the red mare in charge of a Polish boy who did odd tasks about the farm. The mare, as beautiful and delicate as a fine steel spring, stood nervously pawing the gravel and tossing her handsome head. The boy, a great lout with a shock of yellow hair, stood far away from her holding the reins at arm's length.

At the sight of the two the old man laughed and said, "You mustn't let her know you're afraid of her, Ignaz."

The boy gave up the reins and retired to a little distance, still watching the mare resentfully. "Well, she tried to bite me!" he said sullenly.

Quickly, with a youthful agility, John Pentland swung himself to her back . . . quickly enough to keep her from sidling away from him. There was a short, fierce struggle

between the rider and the horse, and in a shower of stones they sped away down the lane that led across the meadows, past the thicket of black pines and the abandoned gravel-pit, toward the house of Mrs. Soames.

CHAPTER IV

IN the solid corner of the world which surrounded Durham, Aunt Cassie played the rôle of an unofficial courier who passed from house to house, from piazza to piazza, collecting and passing on the latest bits of news. When one saw a low cloud of dust moving across the brilliant New England sky above the hedges and stone walls of the countryside, one could be certain that it masked the progress of Cassie Struthers on her daily round of calls. She went always on foot, because she detested motors and was terrified of horses; one might see her coming from a great distance, dressed always in dingy black, tottering along very briskly (for a woman of her age and well-advertised infirmities). One came to expect her arrival at a certain hour, for she was, unless there arose in her path some calamity or piece of news of unusual interest, a punctual woman whose life was as carefully ordered as the vast house in which she lived with the queer Aunt Bella.

It was a great box of a dwelling built by the late Mr. Struthers in the days of cupolas and gazebos on land given him by Aunt Cassie's grandfather on the day of her wedding. Inside it was furnished with a great profusion of plush tassels and antimacassars, all kept with the neatness and rigidity of a museum. There were never any cigar ashes on the floor, nor any dust in the corners, for Aunt Cassie followed her servants about with the eye of a fussy old sergeant inspecting his barracks. Poor Miss Peavey, who grew more and more dowdy and careless as old age began to settle over her, led a life of constant peril, and was forced to build a little house

near the stables to house her Pomeranians and her Siamese cats. For Aunt Cassie could not abide the thought of "the animals dirtying up the house." Even the "retiring room" of the late Mr. Struthers had been converted since his death into a museum, spotless and purified of tobacco and whisky, where his chair sat before his desk, turned away from it a little, as if his spirit were still seated there. On the desk lay his pipe (as he had left it) and the neat piles of paper (carefully dusted each day but otherwise undisturbed) which he had put there with his own hand on the morning they found him seated on the chair, his head fallen back a little, as if asleep. And in the center of the desk lay two handsomely bound volumes—"Cornices of Old Boston Houses" and "Walks and Talks in New England Churchyards"—which he had written in these last sad years when his life seemed slowly to fade from him . . . the years in which Aunt Cassie seemed rapidly to recover the wiry strength and health for which she had been famous as a girl.

The house, people said, had been built by Mr. Struthers in the expectation of a large family, but it had remained great and silent of children's voices as a tomb since the day it was finished, for Aunt Cassie had never been strong until it was too late for her to bear him heirs.

Sabine Callendar had a whole set of theories about the house and about the married life of Aunt Cassie, but they were theories which she kept, in her way, entirely to herself, waiting and watching until she was certain of them. There was a hatred between the two women that was implacable and difficult to define, an emotion almost of savagery which concealed itself beneath polite phrases and casual observations of an acid character. They encountered each other more frequently than Aunt Cassie would have wished, for Sabine, upon her return to Durham, took up Aunt Cassie's habit of going from house to house on foot in search of news and enter-

tainment. They met in drawing-rooms, on piazzas, and sometimes in the very dusty lanes, greeting each other with smiles and vicious looks. They had become rather like two hostile cats watching each other for days at a time, stealthily. Sabine, Aunt Cassie confided in Olivia, made her nervous.

Still, it was Aunt Cassie who had been the first caller at Brook Cottage after the arrival of Sabine. The younger woman had seen her approach, enveloped in a faint cloud of dust, from the windows of Brook Cottage, and the sight filled her with an inexpressible delight. The spare old lady had come along so briskly, almost with impatience, filled with delight (Sabine believed) at having an excuse now to trespass on O'Hara's land and see what he had done to the old cottage. And Sabine believed, too, that she came to discover what life had done to "dear Mr. Struthers' niece, Sabine Calendar." She came as the Official Welcomer of the Community, with hope in her heart that she would find Sabine a returned prodigal, a wrecked woman, ravaged by time and experience, who for twenty years had ignored them all and now returned, a broken and humbled creature, hungry for kindness.

The sight set fire to a whole train of memories in Sabine . . . memories which penetrated deep into her childhood when with her father she had lived in the old house that once stood where O'Hara's new one raised its bright chimneys; memories of days when she had run off by herself to play in the tangled orchard grass among the bleeding-hearts and irises that surrounded this same Brook Cottage where she stood watching the approach of Aunt Cassie. Only, in those days Brook Cottage had been a ruin of a place, with empty windows and sagging doors, ghostly and half-hidden by a shaggy tangle of lilacs and syringas, and now it stood glistening with new paint, the lilacs all neatly clipped and pruned.

There was something in the sight of the old woman's ner-

vous, active figure that struck deep down into a past which Sabine, with the passing of years, had almost succeeded in forgetting; and now it all came back again, sharply and with a kind of stabbing pain, so that she had a sudden odd feeling of having become a little girl again . . . plain, red-haired, freckled and timid, who stood in terror of Aunt Cassie and was always being pulled here and there by a thousand aunts and uncles and cousins because she *would* not be turned into their idea of what a nice little girl ought to be. It was as if the whole past were concentrated in the black figure of the old lady who had been the ring-leader, the viceroy, of all a far-flung tribe, an old woman who had been old even twenty years earlier, lying always on a sofa under a shawl, issuing her edicts, pouring out her ample sympathies, her bitter criticisms. And here she was, approaching briskly, as if the death of Mr. Struthers had somehow released her from bonds which had chafed for too long.

Watching her, one incident after another flashed through the quick, hard brain of Sabine, all recreated with a swift, astounding clarity—the day when she had run off to escape into the world and been found by old John Pentland hiding in the thicket of white birches happily eating blueberries. (She could see his countenance now, stern with its disapproval of such wild behavior, but softening, too, at the sight of the grubby, freckled plain face stained with blueberry juice.) And the return of the captive, when she was surrounded by aunts who dressed her in a clean frock and forced her to sit in the funereal spare bedroom with a New Testament on her knees until she “felt that she could come out and behave like a nice, well-brought-up little girl.” She could see the aunts pulling and fussing at her and saying, “What a shame she didn’t take after her mother in looks!” and, “She’ll have a hard time with such plain, straight red hair.”

And there was, too, the memory of that day when Anson

Pentland, a timid, spiritless little Lord Fauntleroy of a boy, fell into the river and would have been drowned save for his cousin Sabine, who dragged him out, screaming and drenched, only to receive for herself all the scolding for having led him into mischief. And the times when she had been punished for having asked frank and simple questions which she ought not to have asked.

It was difficult to remember any happiness until the day when her father died and she was sent to New York, a girl of twenty, knowing very little of anything and nothing whatever of such things as love and marriage, to live with an uncle in a tall narrow house on Murray Hill. It was on that day (she saw it now with a devastating clarity as she stood watching the approach of Aunt Cassie) that her life had really begun. Until then her existence had been only a confused and tormented affair in which there was very little happiness. It was only later that reality had come to her, painfully, even tragically, in a whole procession of events which had made her slowly into this hard, worldly, cynical woman who found herself, without quite knowing why, back in a world she hated, standing at the window of Brook Cottage, a woman tormented by an immense and acutely living curiosity about people and the strange tangles which their lives sometimes assumed.

She had been standing by the window thinking back into the past with such a fierce intensity that she quite forgot the approach of Aunt Cassie and started suddenly at the sound of the curious, familiar thin voice, amazingly unchanged, calling from the hallway, "Sabine! Sabine dear! It's your Aunt Cassie! Where are you?" as if she had never left Durham at all, as if nothing had changed in twenty years.

At sight of her, the old lady came forward with little fluttering cries to fling her arms about her late husband's niece. Her manner was that of a shepherd receiving a lost

sheep, a manner filled with forgiveness and pity and condescension. The tears welled easily into her eyes and streamed down her face.

Sabine permitted herself, frigidly, to be embraced, and said, "But you don't look a day older, Aunt Cassie. You look stronger than ever." It was a remark which somehow set the whole tone of the relationship between them, a remark which, though it sounded sympathetic and even complimentary, was a harsh thing to say to a woman who had cherished all her life the tradition of invalidism. It was harsh, too, because it was true. Aunt Cassie at forty-seven had been as shriveled and dried as she was now, twenty years later.

The old woman said, "My dear girl, I am miserable . . . miserable." And drying the tears that streamed down her face, she added, "It won't be long now until I go to join dear Mr. Struthers."

Sabine wanted suddenly to laugh, at the picture of Aunt Cassie entering Paradise to rejoin a husband whom she had always called, even in the intimacy of married life, "Mr. Struthers." She kept thinking that Mr. Struthers might not find the reunion so pleasant as his wife anticipated. She had always held a strange belief that Mr. Struthers had chosen death as the best way out.

And she felt a sudden almost warm sense of returning memories, roused by Aunt Cassie's passion for overstatement. Aunt Cassie could never bring herself to say simply, "I'm going to die" which was not at all true. She must say, "I go to join dear Mr. Struthers."

Sabine said, "Oh, no. . . . Oh, no. . . . Don't say that."

"I don't sleep any more. I barely close my eyes at night."

She had seated herself now and was looking about her, absorbing everything in the room, the changes made by the dreadful O'Hara, the furniture he had bought for the house. But most of all she was studying Sabine, devouring her with

sidelong, furtive glances; and Sabine, knowing her so well, saw that the old woman had been given a violent shock. She had come prepared to find a broken, unhappy Sabine and she had found instead this smooth, rather hard and self-contained woman, superbly dressed and poised, from the burnished red hair (that straight red hair the aunts had once thought so hopeless) to the lizard-skin slippers—a woman who had obviously taken hold of life with a firm hand and subdued it, who was in a way complete.

"Your dear uncle never forgot you for a moment, Sabine, in all the years you were away. He died, leaving me to watch over you." And again the easy tears welled up.

("Oh," thought Sabine, "you don't catch me that way. You won't put me back where I once was. You won't even have a chance to meddle in my life.")

Aloud she said, "It's a pity I've always been so far away."

"But I've thought of you, my dear. . . . I've thought of you. Scarcely a night passes when I don't say to myself before going to sleep, 'There is poor Sabine out in the world, turning her back on all of us who love her.'" She sighed abysmally. "I have thought of you, dear. I've prayed for you in the long nights when I have never closed an eye."

And Sabine, talking on half-mechanically, discovered slowly that, in spite of everything, she was no longer afraid of Aunt Cassie. She was no longer a shy, frightened, plain little girl; she even began to sense a challenge, a combat which filled her with a faint sense of warmth. She kept thinking, "She really hasn't changed at all. She still wants to reach out and take possession of me and my life. She's like an octopus reaching out and seizing each member of the family, arranging everything." And she saw Aunt Cassie now, after so many years, in a new light. It seemed to her that there was something glittering and hard and a little sinister beneath all the sighing and tears and easy sympathy. Perhaps she (Sa-

bine) was the only one in all the family who had escaped the reach of those subtle, insinuating tentacles. . . . She had run away.

Meanwhile Aunt Cassie had swept from a vivid and detailed description of the passing of Mr. Struthers into a catalogue of neighborhood and family calamities, of deaths, of broken troths, financial disasters, and the appearance on the horizon of the "dreadful O'Hara." She reproached Sabine for having sold her land to such an outsider. And as she talked on and on she grew less and less human and more and more like some disembodied, impersonal force of nature. Sabine, watching her with piercing green eyes, found her a little terrifying. She had sharpened and hardened with age.

She discussed the divorces which had occurred in Boston, and at length, leaning forward and touching Sabine's hand with her thin, nervous one, she said brokenly: "I felt for you in your trouble, Sabine. I never wrote you because it would have been so painful. I see now that I evaded my duty. But I felt for you. . . . I tried to put myself in your place. I tried to imagine dear Mr. Struthers being unfaithful to me . . . but, of course, I couldn't. He was a saint." She blew her nose and repeated with passion, as if to herself, "A saint!"

("Yes," thought Sabine, "a saint . . . if ever there was one.") She saw that Aunt Cassie was attacking her now from a new point. She was trying to pity her. By being full of pity the old woman would try to break down her defenses and gain possession of her.

Sabine's green eyes took one hard, glinting look. "Did you ever see my husband?" she asked.

"No," said Aunt Cassie, "but I've heard a great deal of him. I've been told how you suffered."

Sabine looked at her with a queer, mocking expression. "Then you've been told wrongly. He is a fascinating man.

I did not suffer. I assure you that I would rather have shared him with fifty other women than have had any one of the men about here all to myself."

There was a frank immorality in this statement which put Aunt Cassie to rout, bag and baggage. She merely stared, finding nothing to say in reply to such a speech. Clearly, in all her life she had never heard any one say a thing so bald and so frank, so completely naked of all pretense of gentility.

Sabine went on coldly, pushing her assault to the very end. "I divorced him at last, not because he was unfaithful to me, but because there was another woman who wanted to marry him . . . a woman whom I respect and like . . . a woman who is still my friend. Understand that I loved him passionately . . . in a very fleshly way. One couldn't help it. I wasn't the only woman. . . . He was a kind of devil, but a very fascinating one."

The old woman was a little stunned but not by any means defeated. Sabine saw a look come into her eyes, a look which clearly said, "So this is what the world has done to my poor, dear, innocent little Sabine!" At last she said with a sigh, "I find it an amazing world. I don't know what it is coming to."

"Nor I," replied Sabine with an air of complete agreement and sympathy. She understood that the struggle was not yet finished, for Aunt Cassie had a way of putting herself always in an impregnable position, of wrapping herself in layer after layer of sighs and sympathy, of charity and forgiveness, of meekness and tears, so that in the end there was no way of suddenly tearing them aside and saying, "There you are . . . naked at last, a horrible meddling old woman!" And Sabine kept thinking, too, that if Aunt Cassie had lived in the days of her witch-baiting ancestor, Preserved Pentland, she would have been burned for a witch.

And all the while Sabine had been suffering, quietly, deep inside, behind the frankly painted face . . . suffering in a way which no one in the world had ever suspected; for it was like tearing out her heart, to talk thus of Richard Callendar, even to speak his name.

Aloud she said, "And how is Mrs. Pentland. . . . I mean Olivia . . . not my cousin. . . . I know how *she* is . . . no better."

"No better. . . . It is one of those things which I can never understand. . . . Why God should have sent such a calamity to a good man like my brother."

"But Olivia . . ." began Sabine, putting an end abruptly to what was clearly the prelude to a pious monologue.

"Oh! . . . Olivia," replied Aunt Cassie, launching into an account of the young Mrs. Pentland. "Olivia is an angel . . . an angel, a blessing of God sent to my poor brother. But she's not been well lately. She's been rather sharp with me . . . even with poor Miss Peavey, who is so sensitive. I can't imagine what has come over her."

It seemed that the strong, handsome Olivia was suffering from nerves. She was, Aunt Cassie said, unhappy about something, although she could not see why Olivia shouldn't be happy . . . a woman with everything in the world.

"Everything?" echoed Sabine. "Has any one in the world got everything?"

"It is Olivia's fault if she hasn't everything. All the materials are there. She has a good husband . . . a husband who never looks at other women."

"Nor at his own wife either," interrupted Sabine. "I know all about Anson. I grew up with him."

Aunt Cassie saw fit to ignore this. "She's rich," she said, resuming the catalogue of Olivia's blessings.

And again Sabine interrupted, "But what does money mean, Aunt Cassie? In our world one is rich and that's the end

of it. One takes it for granted. When one isn't rich any longer, one simply slips out of it. It has very little to do with happiness. . . ."

The strain was beginning to show on Aunt Cassie. "You'd find out if you weren't rich," she observed with asperity, "if your father and great-grandfather hadn't taken care of their money." She recovered herself and made a deprecating gesture. "But don't think I'm criticizing dear Olivia. She is the best, the most wonderful woman." She began to wrap herself once more in kindness and charity and forgiveness. "Only she seems to me to be a little queer lately."

Sabine's artificially crimson mouth took on a slow smile. "It would be too bad if the Pentland family drove two wives insane—one after the other."

Again Aunt Cassie came near to defeat by losing her composure. She snorted, and Sabine helped her out by asking: "And Anson?" ironically. "What is dear Anson doing?"

She told him of Anson's great work, "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony" and of its immense value as a contribution to the history of the nation; and when she had finished with that, she turned to Jack's wretched health, saying in a low, melancholy voice, "It's only a matter of time, you know. . . . At least, so the doctors say. . . . With a heart like that it's only a matter of time." The tears came again.

"And yet," Sabine said slowly, "you say that Olivia has everything."

"Well," replied Aunt Cassie, "perhaps not everything."

Before she left she inquired for Sabine's daughter and was told that she had gone over to Pentlands to see Sybil.

"They went to the same school in France," said Sabine. "They were friends there."

"Yes," said Aunt Cassie. "I was against Sybil's going abroad to school. It fills a girl's head with queer ideas . . .

especially a school like that where any one could go. Since she's home, Sybil behaves very queerly. . . . I think it'll stand in the way of her success in Boston. The boys don't like girls who are different."

"Perhaps," said Sabine, "she may marry outside of Boston. Men aren't the same everywhere. Even in Boston there must be one or two who don't refer to women as 'Good old So-and-so.' Even in Boston there must be men who like women who are well dressed . . . women who are ladies. . . ."

Aunt Cassie began to grow angry again, but Sabine swept over her. "Don't be insulted, Aunt Cassie. I only mean ladies in the old-fashioned, glamorous sense. . . . Besides," she continued, "whom could she marry who wouldn't be a cousin or a connection of some sort?"

"She ought to marry here . . . among the people she's always known. There's a Mannering boy who would be a good match, and James Thorne's youngest son."

Sabine smiled. "So you have plans for her already. You've settled it?"

"Of course, nothing is settled. I'm only thinking of it with Sybil's welfare in view. If she married one of those boys she'd know what she was getting. She'd know that she was marrying a gentleman."

"Perhaps . . ." said Sabine. "Perhaps." Somehow a devil had taken possession of her and she added softly, "There was, of course, Horace Pentland. . . . One can never be quite sure." (She never forgot anything, Sabine.)

And at the same moment she saw, standing outside the door that opened on the terrace next to the marshes, a solid, dark, heavy figure which she recognized with a sudden feeling of delight as O'Hara. He had been walking across the fields with the wiry little Higgins, who had left him and continued on his way down the lane in the direction of Pent-

lands. At the sight of him, Aunt Cassie made every sign of an attempt to escape quickly, but Sabine said in a voice ominous with sweetness, "You must meet Mr. O'Hara. I think you've never met him. He's a charming man." And she placed herself in such a position that it was impossible for the old woman to escape without losing every vestige of dignity.

Then Sabine called gently, "Come in, Mr. O'Hara. . . . Mrs. Struthers is here and wants so much to meet her new neighbor."

The door opened and O'Hara stepped in, a swarthy, rather solidly built man of perhaps thirty-five, with a shapely head on which the vigorous black hair was cropped close, and with blue eyes that betrayed his Irish origin by the half-hidden sparkle of amusement at this move of Sabine's. He had a strong jaw and full, rather sensual, lips and a curious sense of great physical strength, as if all his clothes were with difficulty modeled to the muscles that lay underneath. He wore no hat, and his skin was a dark tan, touched at the cheek-bones by the dull flush of health and good blood.

He was, one would have said at first sight, a common, vulgar man in that narrow-jawed world about Durham, a man, perhaps, who had come by his muscles as a dock-laborer. Sabine had thought him vulgar in the beginning, only to succumb in the end to a crude sort of power which placed him above the realm of such distinctions. And she was a shrewd woman, too, devoted passionately to the business of getting at the essence of people; she knew that vulgarity had nothing to do with a man who had eyes so shrewd and full of mockery.

He came forward quietly and with a charming air of deference in which there was a faint suspicion of nonsense, a curious shadow of vulgarity, only one could not be certain whether he was not being vulgar by deliberation.

"It is a great pleasure," he said. "Of course, I have seen Mrs. Struthers many times . . . at the horse shows . . . the whippet races."

Aunt Cassie was drawn up, stiff as a poker, with an air of having found herself unexpectedly face to face with a rattlesnake.

"I have had the same experience," she said. "And of course I've seen all the improvements you have made here on the farm." The word "improvements" she spoke with a sort of venom in it, as if it had been instead a word like "arson."

"We'll have some tea," observed Sabine. "Sit down, Aunt Cassie."

But Aunt Cassie did not unbend. "I promised Olivia to be back at Pentlands for tea," she said. "And I am late already." Pulling on her black gloves, she made a sudden dip in the direction of O'Hara. "We shall probably see each other again, Mr. O'Hara, since we are neighbors."

"Indeed, I hope so. . . ."

Then she kissed Sabine again and murmured, "I hope, my dear, that you will come often to see me, now that you've come back to us. Make my house your own home." She turned to O'Hara, finding a use for him suddenly in her warfare against Sabine. "You know, Mr. O'Hara, she is a traitor, in her way. She was raised among us and then went away for twenty years. She hasn't any loyalty in her."

She made the speech with a stiff air of playfulness, as if, of course, she were only making a joke and the speech meant nothing at all. Yet the air was filled with a cloud of implications. It was the sort of tactics in which she excelled.

Sabine went with her to the door, and when she returned she discovered O'Hara standing by the window, watching the figure of Aunt Cassie as she moved indignantly down the road in the direction of Pentlands. Sabine stood there for a moment, studying the straight, strong figure outlined against

the light, and she got suddenly a curious sense of the enmity between him and the old woman. They stood, the two of them, in a strange way as the symbols of two great forces—the one negative, the other intensely positive; the one the old, the other, the new; the one of decay, the other of vigorous, almost too lush growth. Nothing could ever reconcile them. According to the scheme of things, they would be implacable enemies to the end. But Sabine had no doubts as to the final victor; the same scheme of things showed small respect for all that Aunt Cassie stood for. That was one of the wisdoms Sabine had learned since she had escaped from Durham into the uncompromising realities of the great world.

When she spoke, she said in a noncommittal sort of voice, "Mrs. Struthers is a remarkable woman."

And O'Hara, turning, looked at her with a sudden glint of humor in his blue eyes. "Extraordinary . . . I'm sure of it."

"And a powerful woman," said Sabine. "Wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove. It is never good to underestimate such strength. And now. . . . How do you like your tea?"

He took no tea but contented himself with munching a bit of toast and afterward smoking a cigar, clearly pleased with himself in a naïve way in the rôle of landlord coming to inquire of his tenant whether everything was satisfactory. He had a liking for this hard, clever woman who was now only a tenant of the land—his land—which she had once owned. When he thought of it—that he, Michael O'Hara, had come to own this farm in the midst of the fashionable and dignified world of Durham—there was something incredible in the knowledge, something which never ceased to warm him with a strong sense of satisfaction. By merely turning his head, he could see in the mirror the reflection

of the long scar on his temple, marked there by a broken bottle in the midst of a youthful fight along the India Wharf. He, Michael O'Hara, without education save that which he had given himself, without money, without influence, had raised himself to this position before his thirty-sixth birthday. In the autumn he would be a candidate for Congress, certain of election in the back Irish districts. He, Michael O'Hara, was on his way to being one of the great men of New England, a country which had once been the tight little paradise of people like the Pentlands.

Only no one must ever suspect the depth of that great satisfaction.

Yes, he had a liking for this strange woman, who ought to have been his enemy and, oddly enough, was not. He liked the shrewd directness of her mind and the way she had of sitting there opposite him, turning him over and over while he talked, as if he had been a small bug under a microscope. She was finding out all about him; and he understood that, for it was a trick in which he, himself, was well-practised. It was by such methods that he had got ahead in the world. It puzzled him, too, that she should have come out of that Boston-Durham world and yet could be so utterly different from it. He had a feeling that somewhere in the course of her life something had happened to her, something terrible which in the end had given her a great understanding and clarity of mind. He knew, too, almost at once, on the day she had driven up to the door of the cottage, that she had made a discovery about life which he himself had made long since . . . that there is nothing of such force as the power of a person content merely to be himself, nothing so invincible as the power of simple honesty, nothing so successful as the life of one who runs alone. Somewhere she had learned all this. She was like a woman to whom nothing could ever again happen.

They talked for a time, idly and pleasantly, with a sense of understanding unusual in two people who had known each other for so short a time; they spoke of the farm, of Pentlands, of the mills and the Poles in Durham, of the country as it had been in the days when Sabine was a child. And all the while he had that sense of her weighing and watching him, of feeling out the faint echo of a brogue in his speech and the rather hard, nasal quality that remained from those days along India Wharf and the memories of a ne'er-do-well, superstitious Irish father.

He could not have known that she was a woman who included among her friends men and women of a dozen nationalities, who lived a life among the clever, successful people of the world . . . the architects, the painters, the politicians, the scientists. He could not have known the ruthless rule she put up against tolerating any but people who were "complete." He could have known nothing of her other life in Paris, and London, and New York, which had nothing to do with the life in Durham and Boston. And yet he did know. . . . He saw that, despite the great difference in their worlds, there was a certain kinship between them, that they had both come to look upon the world as a pie from which any plum might be drawn if one only knew the knack.

And Sabine, on her side, not yet quite certain about casting aside all barriers, was slowly reaching the same understanding. There was no love or sentimentality in the spark that flashed between them. She was more than ten years older than O'Hara and had done with such things long ago. It was merely a recognition of one strong person by another.

It was O'Hara who first took advantage of the bond. In the midst of the conversation, he had turned the talk rather abruptly to Pentlands.

"I've never been there and I know very little of the life," he said, "but I've watched it from a distance and it interests

me. It's like something out of a dream, completely dead . . . dead all save for young Mrs. Pentland and Sybil."

Sabine smiled. "You know Sybil, then?"

"We ride together every morning. . . . We met one morning by chance along the path by the river and since then we've gone nearly every day."

"She's a charming girl. . . . She went to school in France with my daughter, Thérèse. I saw a great deal of her then."

Far back in her mind the thought occurred to her that there would be something very amusing in the prospect of Sybil married to O'Hara. It would produce such an uproar with Anson and Aunt Cassie and the other relatives. . . . A Pentland married to an Irish Roman Catholic politician!

"She is like her mother, isn't she?" asked O'Hara, sitting forward a bit on his chair. He had a way of sitting thus, in the tense, quiet alertness of a cat.

"Very like her mother. . . . Her mother is a remarkable woman . . . a charming woman . . . also, I might say, what is the rarest of all things, a really good and generous woman."

"I've thought that. . . . I've seen her a half-dozen times. I asked her to help me in planting the garden here at the cottage because I knew she had a passion for gardens. And she didn't refuse . . . though she scarcely knew me. She came over and helped me with it. I saw her then and came to know her. But when that was finished, she went back to Pentlands and I haven't seen her since. It's almost as if she meant to avoid me. Sometimes I feel sorry for her. . . . It must be a queer life for a woman like that . . . young and beautiful."

"She has a great deal to occupy her at Pentlands. And it's true that it's not a very fascinating life. Still, I'm sure she couldn't bear being pitied. . . . She's the last woman in the world to want pity."

Curiously, O'Hara flushed, the red mounting slowly beneath the dark-tanned skin.

"I thought," he said a little sadly, "that her husband or Mrs. Struthers might have raised objections. . . . I know how they feel toward me. There's no use pretending not to know."

"It is quite possible," said Sabine.

There was a sudden embarrassing silence, which gave Sabine time to pull her wits together and organize a thousand sudden thoughts and impressions. She was beginning to understand, bit by bit, the real reasons of their hatred for O'Hara, the reasons which lay deep down underneath, perhaps so deep that none of them ever saw them for what they were.

And then out of the silence she heard the voice of O'Hara saying, in a queer, hushed way, "I mean to ask something of you . . . something that may sound ridiculous. I don't pretend that it isn't, but I mean to ask it anyway."

For a moment he hesitated and then, rising quickly, he stood looking away from her out of the door, toward the distant blue marshes and the open sea. She fancied that he was trembling a little, but she could not be certain. What she did know was that he made an immense and heroic effort, that for a moment he, a man who never did such things, placed himself in a position where he would be defenseless and open to being cruelly hurt; and for the moment all the recklessness seemed to flow out of him and in its place there came a queer sadness, almost as if he felt himself defeated in some way. . . .

He said, "What I mean to ask you is this. . . . Will you ask me sometimes here to the cottage when she will be here too?" He turned toward her suddenly and added, "It will mean a great deal to me . . . more than you can imagine."

She did not answer him at once, but sat watching him with a poorly concealed intensity; and presently, flicking the ciga-

rette ashes casually from her gown, she asked, "And do you think it would be quite moral of me?"

He shrugged his shoulders and looked at her in astonishment, as if he had expected her, least of all people in the world, to ask such a thing.

"It might," he said, "make us both a great deal happier."

"Perhaps . . . perhaps not. It's not so simple as that. Besides, it isn't happiness that one places first at Pentlands."

"No. . . . Still. . . ." He made a sudden vigorous gesture, as if to sweep aside all objections.

"You're a queer man. . . . I'll see what can be done."

He thanked her and went out shyly without another word, to stride across the meadows, his black head bent thoughtfully, in the direction of his new bright chimneys. At his heels trotted the springer, which had lain waiting for him outside the door. There was something about the robust figure, crossing the old meadow through the blue twilight, that carried a note of lonely sadness. The self-confidence, the assurance, seemed to have melted away in some mysterious fashion. It was almost as if one man had entered the cottage a little while before and another, a quite different man, had left it just now. Only one thing, Sabine saw, could have made the difference, and that was the name of Olivia.

When he had disappeared Sabine went up to her room overlooking the sea and lay there for a long time thinking. She was by nature an indolent woman, especially at times when her brain worked with a fierce activity. It was working thus now, in a kind of fever, confused and yet tremendously clear; for the visits from Aunt Cassie and O'Hara had ignited her almost morbid passion for vicarious experience. She had a sense of being on the brink of some calamity which, beginning long ago in a hopeless tangle of origins and motives, was

ready now to break forth with the accumulated force of years.

It was only now that she began to understand a little what it was that had drawn her back to a place which held memories so unhappy as those haunting the whole countryside of Durham. She saw that it must have been all the while a desire for vindication, a hunger to show them that, in spite of everything, of the straight red hair and the plain face, the silly ideas with which they had filled her head, in spite even of her unhappiness over her husband, she had made of her life a successful, even a brilliant, affair. She had wanted to show them that she stood aloof now and impregnable, quite beyond their power to curb or to injure her. And for a moment she suspected that the half-discerned motive was an even stronger thing, akin perhaps to a desire for vengeance; for she held this world about Durham responsible for the ruin of her happiness. She knew now, as a worldly woman of forty-six, that if she had been brought up knowing life for what it was, she might never have lost the one man who had ever roused a genuine passion in a nature so hard and dry.

It was all confused and tormented and vague, yet the visit of Aunt Cassie, filled with implications and veiled attempts to humble her, had cleared the air enormously.

And behind the closed lids, the green eyes began to see a whole procession of calamities which lay perhaps within her power to create. She began to see how it might even be possible to bring the whole world of Pentlands down about their heads in a collapse which could create only freedom and happiness to Olivia and her daughter. And it was these two alone for whom she had any affection; the others might be damned, gloriously damned, while she stood by without raising a finger.

She began to see where the pieces of the puzzle lay, the

wedges which might force open the solid security of the familiar, unchanging world that once more surrounded her.

Lying there in the twilight, she saw the whole thing in the process of being fitted together and she experienced a sudden intoxicating sense of power, of having all the tools at hand, of being the *dea ex machinâ* of the calamity.

She was beginning to see, too, how the force, the power that had lain behind all the family, was coming slowly to an end in a pale, futile weakness. There would always be money to bolster up their world, for the family had never lost its shopkeeping tradition of thrift; but in the end even money could not save them. There came a time when a great fortune might be only a shell without a desiccated rottenness inside.

She was still lying there when Thérèse came in—a short, plain, rather stocky, dark girl with a low straight black bang across her forehead. She was hot and soiled by the mud of the marshes, as the red-haired unhappy little girl had been so many times in that far-off, half-forgotten childhood.

“Where have you been?” she asked indifferently, for there was always a curious sense of strangeness between Sabine and her daughter.

“Catching frogs to dissect,” said Thérèse. “They’re damned scarce and I slipped into the river.”

Sabine, looking at her daughter, knew well enough there was no chance of marrying off a girl so queer, and wilful and untidy, in Durham. She saw that it had been a silly idea from the beginning; but she found satisfaction in the knowledge that she had molded Thérèse’s life so that no one could ever hurt her as they had hurt her mother. Out of the queer nomadic life they had led together, meeting all sorts of men and women who were, in Sabine’s curious sense

of the word, "complete," the girl had pierced her way somehow to the bottom of things. She was building her young life upon a rock, so that she could afford to feel contempt for the very forces which long ago had hurt her mother. She might, like O'Hara, be suddenly humbled by love; but that, Sabine knew, was a glorious thing well worth suffering.

She knew it each time that she looked at her child and saw the clear gray eyes of the girl's father looking out of the dark face with the same proud look of indifferent confidence which had fascinated her twenty years ago. So long as Thérèse was alive, she would never be able wholly to forget him.

"Go wash yourself," she said. "Old Mr. Pentland and Olivia and Mrs. Soames are coming to dine and play bridge."

As she dressed for dinner she no longer asked herself, "Why did I ever imagine Thérèse might find a husband here? What ever induced me to come back here to be bored all summer long?"

She had forgotten all that. She began to see that the summer held prospects of diversion. It might even turn into a fascinating game. She knew that her return had nothing to do with Thérèse's future; she had been drawn back into Durham by some vague but overwhelming desire for mischief.

CHAPTER V

I

WHEN Anson Pentland came down from the city in the evening, Olivia was always there to meet him dutifully and inquire about the day. The answers were always the same: "No, there was not much doing in town," and, "It was very hot," or, "I made a discovery to-day that will be of great use to me in the book."

Then after a bath he would appear in tweeds to take his exercise in the garden, pottering about mildly and peering closely with his near-sighted blue eyes at little tags labeled "General Pershing" or "Caroline Testout" or "Poincaré" or "George Washington" which he tied carefully on the new dahlias and roses and smaller shrubs. And, more often than not, the gardener would spend half the next morning removing the tags and placing them on the proper plants, for Anson really had no interest in flowers and knew very little about them. The tagging was only a part of his passion for labeling things; it made the garden at Pentlands seem a more subdued and ordered place. Sometimes it seemed to Olivia that he went through life ticketing and pigeonholing everything that came his way: manners, emotions, thoughts, everything. It was a habit that was growing on him in middle-age.

Dinner was usually late because Anson liked to take advantage of the long summer twilights, and after dinner it was the habit of all the family, save Jack, who went to bed immediately afterward, to sit in the Victorian drawing-room, reading and writing letters or sometimes playing patience, with

Anson in his corner at Mr. Lowell's desk working over "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony," and keeping up a prodigious correspondence with librarians and old men and women of a genealogical bent. The routine of the evening rarely changed, for Anson disliked going out and Olivia preferred not to go alone. It was only with the beginning of the summer, when Sybil was grown and had begun to go out occasionally to dinners and balls, and the disturbing Sabine, with her passion for playing bridge, had come into the neighborhood, that the routine was beginning to break up. There were fewer evenings now with Olivia and Sybil playing patience and old John Pentland sitting by the light of Mr. Longfellow's lamp reading or simply staring silently before him, lost in thought.

There were times in those long evenings when Olivia, looking up suddenly and for no reason at all, would discover that Sybil was sitting in the same fashion watching her, and both of them would know that they, like old John Pentland, had been sitting there all the while holding books in their hands without knowing a word of what they had read. It was as if a kind of enchantment descended upon them, as if they were waiting for something. Once or twice the silence had been broken sharply by the unbearable sound of groans coming from the north wing when *she* had been seized suddenly by one of her fits of violence.

Anson's occasional comment and Olivia's visits to Jack's room to see that nothing had happened to him were the only interruptions. They spoke always in low voices when they played double patience in order not to disturb Anson at his work. Sometimes he encountered a bit of information for which he had been searching for a long time and then he would turn and tell them of it.

There was the night when he made his discovery about Savina Pentland. . . .

"I was right about Savina Pentland," he said. "She *was* a first cousin and not a second cousin of Toby Cane."

Olivia displayed an interest by saying, "Was that what you wrote to the *Transcript* about?"

"Yes . . . and I was sure that the genealogical editor was wrong. See . . . here it is in one of Jared Pentland's letters at the time she was drowned. . . . Jared was her husband. . . . He refers to Toby Cane as her only male first cousin."

"That will help you a great deal," said Olivia, "won't it?"

"It will help clear up the chapter about the origins of her family." And then, after a little pause, "I wish that I could get some trace of the correspondence between Savina Pentland and Cane. I'm sure it would be full of things . . . but it seems not to exist . . . only one or two letters which tell nothing."

And then he relapsed again into a complete and passionate silence, lost in the rustle of old books and yellowed letters, leaving the legend of Savina Pentland to take possession of the others in the room.

The memory of this woman had a way of stealing in upon the family unaware, quite without their willing it. She was always there in the house, more lively than any of the more sober ancestors, perhaps because of them all she alone had been touched by splendor; she alone had been in her reckless way a great lady. There was a power in her recklessness and extravagance which came, in the end, to obscure all those other plain, solemn-faced, thrifty wives whose portraits adorned the hall of Pentlands, much as a rising sun extinguishes the feeble light of the stars. And about her obscure origin there clung a perpetual aura of romance, since there was no one to know just who her mother was or exactly whence she came. The mother was born perhaps of stock no humbler than the first shopkeeping Pentland to land on the Cape, but there was in

her the dark taint of Portuguese blood; some said that she was the daughter of a fisherman. And Savina herself had possessed enough of fascination to lure a cautious Pentland into eloping with her against the scruples that were a very fiber of the Pentland bones and flesh.

The portrait of Savina Pentland stood forth among the others in the white hall, fascinating and beautiful not only because the subject was a dark, handsome woman, but because it had been done by Ingres in Rome during the years when he made portraits of tourists to save himself from starvation. It was the likeness of a small but voluptuous woman with great wanton dark eyes and smooth black hair pulled back from a camellia-white brow and done in a little knot on the nape of the white neck—a woman who looked out of the old picture with the flashing, spirited glance of one who lived boldly and passionately. She wore a gown of peach-colored velvet ornamented with the famous parure of pearls and emeralds given her, to the scandal of a thrifty family, by the infatuated Jared Pentland. Passing the long gallery of portraits in the hallway it was always Savina Pentland whom one noticed. She reigned there as she must have reigned in life, so bold and splendourous as to seem a bit vulgar, especially in a world of such sober folk, yet so beautiful and so spirited that she made all the others seem scarcely worth consideration.

Even in death she had remained an "outsider," for she was the only one of the family who did not rest quietly among the stunted trees at the top of the bald hill where the first Pentlands had laid their dead. All that was left of the warm, soft body lay in the white sand at the bottom of the ocean within sight of Pentlands. It was as if fate had delivered her in death into a grave as tempestuous and violent as she had been in life. And somewhere near her in the restless white sand lay Toby Cane, with whom she had gone sailing one

bright summer day when a sudden squall turned a gay excursion into a tragedy.

Even Aunt Cassie, who distrusted any woman with gaze so bold and free as that set down by the brush of Ingres—even Aunt Cassie could not annihilate the glamour of Savina's legend. For her there was, too, another, more painful, memory hidden in the knowledge that the parure of pearls and emeralds and all the other jewels which Savina Pentland had wrung from her thrifty husband, lay buried somewhere in the white sand between her bones and those of her cousin. To Aunt Cassie Savina Pentland seemed more than merely a reckless, extravagant creature. She was an enemy of the Pentland fortune and of all the virtues of the family.

The family portraits were of great value to Anson in compiling his book, for they represented the most complete collection of ancestors existing in all America. From the portrait of the emigrating Pentland, painted in a wooden manner by some traveling painter of tavern signs, to the rather handsome one of John Pentland, painted at middle-age in a pink coat by Sargent, and the rather bad and liverish one of Anson, also by Mr. Sargent, the collection was complete save for two—the weak Jared Pentland who had married Savina, and the Pentland between old John's father and the clipper-ship owner, who had died at twenty-three, a disgraceful thing for any Pentland to have done.

The pictures hung in a neat double row in the lofty hall, arranged chronologically and without respect for lighting, so that the good ones like those by Ingres and Sargent's picture of old John Pentland and the unfinished Gilbert Stuart of Ashur Pentland hung in obscure shadows, and the bad ones like the tavern-sign portrait of the first Pentland were exposed in a glare of brilliant light.

This father of all the family had been painted at the great age of eighty-nine and looked out from his wooden back-

ground, a grim, hard-mouthed old fellow with white hair and shrewd eyes set very close together. It was a face such as one might find to-day among the Plymouth Brethren of some remote, half-forgotten Sussex village, the face of a man notable only for the toughness of his body and the rigidity of a mind which dissented from everything. At the age of eighty-four, he had been cast out for dissension from the church which he had come to regard as his own property.

Next to him hung the portrait of a Pentland who had been a mediocrity and left not even a shadowy legend; and then appeared the insolent, disagreeable face of the Pentland who had ducked eccentric old women for witches and cut off the ears of peace-loving Quakers in the colony founded in "freedom to worship God."

The third Pentland had been the greatest evangelist of his time, a man who went through New England holding high the torch, exhorting rude village audiences by the coarsest of language to such a pitch of excitement that old women died of apoplexy and young women gave birth to premature children. The sermons which still existed showed him to be a man uncultivated and at times almost illiterate, yet his vast energy had founded a university and his fame as an exhorter and "the flaming sword of the Lord" had traveled to the ignorant and simple-minded brethren of the English back country.

The next Pentland was the eldest of the exhorter's twenty children (by four wives), a man who clearly had departed from his father's counsels and appeared in his portrait a sensual, fleshly specimen, very fat and almost good-natured, with thick red lips. It was this Pentland who had founded the fortune which gave the family its first step upward in the direction of the gentility which had ended with the figure of Anson bending over "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony." He had made a large fortune by

equipping privateers and practising a near-piracy on British merchantmen; and there was, too, a dark rumor (which Anson intended to overlook) that he had made as much as three hundred per cent profit on a single shipload of negroes in the African slave trade.

After him there were portraits of two Pentlands who had taken part in the Revolution and then another hiatus of mediocrity, including the gap represented by the missing Jared; and then appeared the Anthony Pentland who increased the fortune enormously in the clipper trade. It was the portrait of a swarthy, powerful man (the first of the dark Pentlands, who could all be traced directly to Savina's Portuguese blood), painted by a second-rate artist devoted to realism, who had depicted skilfully the warts which marred the distinguished old gentleman. In the picture he stood in the garden before the Pentland house at Durham with marshes in the background and his prize clipper *Semiramis* riding, with all sail up, the distant ocean.

Next to him appeared the portrait of old John Pentland's father—a man of pious expression, dressed all in black, with a high black stock and a wave of luxuriant black hair, the one who had raised the family to really great wealth by contracts for shoes and blankets for the soldiers at Gettysburg and Bull Run and Richmond. After him, gentility had conquered completely, and the Sargent portrait of old John Pentland at middle-age showed a man who was master of hounds and led the life of a country gentleman, a man clearly of power and character, whose strength of feature had turned slowly into the bitter hardness of the old man who sat now in the light of Mr. Longfellow's lamp reading or staring before him into space while his son set down the long history of the family.

The gallery was fascinating to strangers, as the visual record of a family which had never lost any money (save for the extravagance of Savina Pentland's jewels), a family which

had been the backbone of a community, a family in which the men married wives for thrift and housewifely virtues rather than for beauty, a family solid and respectable and full of honor. It was a tribe magnificent in its virtue and its strength, even at times in its intolerance and hypocrisy. It stood represented now by old John Pentland and Anson, and the boy who lay abovestairs in the room next Olivia's, dying slowly.

At ten o'clock each night John Pentland bade them good-night and went off to bed, and at eleven Anson, after arranging his desk neatly and placing his papers in their respective files, and saying to Olivia, "I wouldn't sit up too late, if I were you, when you are so tired," left them and disappeared. Soon after him, Sybil kissed her mother and climbed the stairs past all the ancestors.

It was only then, after they had all left her, that a kind of peace settled over Olivia. The burdens lifted, and the cares, the worries, the thoughts that were always troubling her, faded into the distance and for a time she sat leaning back in the winged armchair with her eyes closed, listening to the sounds of the night—the faint murmur of the breeze in the faded lilacs outside the window, the creaking that afflicts very old houses in the night, and sometimes the ominous sound of Miss Egan's step traversing distantly the old north wing. And then one night she heard again the distant sound of Higgins' voice swearing at the red mare as he made his round of the stables before going to bed.

And after they had all gone she opened her book and fell to reading. *"Madame de Clèves ne répondit rien, et elle pensoit avec honte qu'elle auroit pris tout ce que l'on disoit du changement de ce prince pour des marques de sa passion, si elle n'avoit point été détrompée. Elle se sentoit quelque*

aigreur contre Madame la Dauphine. . . ." This was a world in which she felt somehow strangely at peace, as if she had once lived in it and returned in the silence of the night.

At midnight she closed the book, and making a round of the lower rooms, put out the lights and went up to the long stairway to listen at the doorway of her son's room for the weak, uncertain sound of his breathing.

2

Olivia was right in her belief that Anson was ashamed of his behavior on the night of the ball. It was not that he made an apology or even mentioned the affair. He simply never spoke of it again. For weeks after the scene he did not mention the name of O'Hara, perhaps because the name brought up inevitably the memory of his sudden, insulting speech; but his sense of shame prevented him from harassing her on the subject. What he never knew was that Olivia, while hating him for the insult aimed at her father, was also pleased in a perverse, feminine way because he had displayed for a moment a sudden fit of genuine anger. For a moment he had come very near to being a husband who might interest his wife.

But in the end he only sank back again into a sea of indifference so profound that even Aunt Cassie's campaign of insinuations and veiled proposals could not stir him into action. The old woman managed to see him alone once or twice, saying to him, "Anson, your father is growing old and can't manage everything much longer. You must begin to take a stand yourself. The family can't rest on the shoulders of a woman. Besides, Olivia is an outsider, really. She's never understood our world." And then, shaking her head sadly, she would murmur, "There'll be trouble. An-

son, when your father dies, if you don't show some backbone. You'll have trouble with Sybil; she's very queer and pig-headed in her quiet way, just as Olivia was in the matter of sending her to school in Paris."

And after a pause, "I am the last person in the world to interfere; it's only for your own good and Olivia's and all the family's."

And Anson, to be rid of her, would make promises, facing her with averted eyes in some corner of the garden or the old house where she had skilfully run him to earth beyond the possibility of escape. And he would leave her, troubled and disturbed because the world and this family which had been saddled unwillingly upon him, would permit him no peace to go on with his writing. He really hated Aunt Cassie because she had never given him any peace, never since the days when she had kept him in the velvet trousers and Fauntleroy curls which spurred the jeers of the plain, red-haired little Sabine. She had never ceased to reproach him for "not being a man and standing up for his rights." It seemed to him that Aunt Cassie was always hovering near, like a dark persistent fury, always harassing him; and yet he knew, more by instinct than by any process of reasoning, that she was his ally against the others, even his own wife and father and children. He and Aunt Cassie prayed to the same gods.

So he did nothing, and Olivia, keeping her word, spoke of O'Hara to Sybil one day as they sat alone at breakfast.

The girl had been riding with him that very morning and she sat in her riding-clothes, her face flushed by the early morning exercise, telling her mother of the beauties of the country back of Durham, of the new beagle puppies, and of the death of "Hardhead" Smith, who was the last farmer of old New England blood in the county. His half-witted

son, she said, was being taken away to an asylum. O'Hara, she said, was buying his little stony patch of ground.

When she had finished, her mother said, "And O'Hara? You like him, don't you?"

Sybil had a way of looking piercingly at a person, as if her violet eyes tried to bore quite through all pretense and unveil the truth. She had a power of honesty and simplicity that was completely disarming, and she used it now, smiling at her mother, candidly.

"Yes, I like him very much. . . . But . . . but . . ."

She laughed softly. "Are you worrying about my marrying him, my falling in love—because you needn't. I am fond of him because he's the one person around here who likes the things I like. He loves riding in the early morning when the dew is still on the grass and he likes racing with me across the lower meadow by the gravel-pit, and well—he's an interesting man. When he talks, he makes sense. But don't worry; I shan't marry him."

"I *was* interested," said Olivia, "because you do see him more than any one about here."

Again Sybil laughed. "But he's old, Mama. He's more than thirty-five. He's middle-aged. I know what sort of man I want to marry. I know exactly. He's going to be my own age."

"One can't always tell. It's not so easy as that."

"I'm sure I can tell." Her face took on an expression of gravity. "I've devoted a good deal of thought to it and I've watched a great many others."

Olivia wanted to smile, but she knew she dared not if she were to keep her hold upon confidences so charming and naïve.

"And I'm sure that I'll know the man when I see him, right away, at once. It'll be like a spark, like my friendship with O'Hara, only deeper than that."

"Did you ever talk to Thérèse about love?" asked Olivia.

"No; you can't talk to her about such things. She wouldn't understand. With Thérèse everything is scientific, biological. When Thérèse marries, I think it will be some man she has picked out as the proper father, scientifically, for her children."

"That's not a bad idea."

"She might just have children by him without marrying him, the way she breeds frogs. I think that's horrible."

Again Olivia was seized with an irresistible impulse to laugh, and controlled herself heroically. She kept thinking of how silly, how ignorant, she had been at Sybil's age, silly and ignorant despite the unclean sort of sophistication she had picked up in the corridors of Continental hotels. She kept thinking how much better a chance Sybil had for happiness. . . . Sybil, sitting there gravely, defending her warm ideas of romance against the scientific onslaughts of the swarthy, passionate Thérèse.

"It will be some one like O'Hara," continued Sybil. "Some one who is very much alive—only not middle-aged like O'Hara."

(So Sybil thought of O'Hara as middle-aged, and he was four years younger than Olivia, who felt and looked so young. The girl kept talking of O'Hara as if his life were over; but that perhaps was only because she herself was so young.)

Olivia sighed now, despite herself. "You mustn't expect too much from the world, Sybil. Nothing is perfect, not even marriage. One always has to make compromises."

"Oh, I know that; I've thought a great deal about it. All the same, I'm sure I'll know the man when I see him." She leaned forward and said earnestly, "Couldn't you tell when you were a girl?"

"Yes," said Olivia softly. "I could tell."

And then, inevitably. Sybil asked what Olivia kept pray-

ing she would not ask. She could hear the girl asking it before the words were spoken. She knew exactly what she would say.

"Didn't you know at once when you met Father?"

And in spite of every effort, the faint echo of a sigh escaped Olivia. "Yes, I knew."

She saw Sybil give her one of those quick, piercing looks of inquiry and then bow her head abruptly, as if pretending to study the pattern on her plate.

When she spoke again, she changed the subject abruptly, so that Olivia knew she suspected the truth, a thing which she had guarded with a fierce secrecy for so long.

"Why don't you take up riding again, Mother?" she asked. "I'd love to have you go with me. We would go with O'Hara in the mornings, and then Aunt Cassie couldn't have anything to say about my getting involved with him." She looked up. "You'd like him. You couldn't help it."

She saw that Sybil was trying to help her in some way, to divert her and drive away the unhappiness.

"I like him already," said Olivia, "very much."

Then she rose, saying, "I promised Sabine to motor into Boston with her to-day. We're leaving in twenty minutes."

She went quickly away because she knew it was perilous to sit there any longer talking of such things while Sybil watched her, eager with the freshness of youth which has all life before it.

Out of all their talk two things remained distinct in her mind: one that Sybil thought of O'Hara as middle-aged—almost an old man, for whom there was no longer any chance of romance; the other the immense possibility for tragedy that lay before a girl who was so certain that love would be a glorious romantic affair, so certain of the ideal man whom she would find one day. What was she to do with Sybil? Where was she to find that man? And when she found

him, what difficulties would she have to face with John Pentland and Anson and Aunt Cassie and the host of cousins and connections who would be marshaled to defeat her?

For she saw clearly enough that this youth for whom Sybil was waiting would never be their idea of a proper match. It would be a man with qualities which O'Hara possessed, and even Higgins, the groom. She saw perfectly why Sybil had a fondness for these two outsiders; she had come to see it more and more clearly of late. It was because they possessed a curious, indefinable solidity that the others at Pentlands all lacked, and a certain fire and vitality. Neither blood, nor circumstance, nor tradition, nor wealth, had made life for them an atrophied, empty affair, in which there was no need for effort, for struggle, for combat. They had not been lost in a haze of transcendental maunderings. O'Hara, with his career and his energy, and Higgins, with his rabbit-like love-affairs and his nearness to all that was earthy, still carried about them a sense of the great zest in life. They reached down somehow into the roots of things where there was still savor and fertility.

And as she walked along the hallway, she found herself laughing aloud over the titles of the only three books which the Pentland family had ever produced—"The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony" and Mr. Struthers' two books, "Cornices of Old Boston Houses" and "Walks and Talks in New England Churchyards." She thought suddenly of what Sabine had once said acidly of New England—that it was a place where thoughts were likely to grow "higher and fewer."

But she was frightened, too, because in the life of enchantment which surrounded her, the virtues of O'Hara and Higgins seemed to her the only things in the world worth possessing. She wanted desperately to be alive, as she had never been, and she knew that this, too, was what Sybil sought in

all her groping, half-blind romantic youth. It was something which the girl sensed and had never clearly understood, something which she knew existed and was awaiting her.

3

Sabine, watching O'Hara as he crossed the fields through the twilight, had penetrated in a sudden flash of intuition the depths of his character. His profound loneliness was, perhaps, the key which unlocked the whole of his soul, a key which Sabine knew well enough, for there had never been a time in all her existence, save for a sudden passionate moment or two in the course of her life with Callendar, when she was free of a painful feeling that she was alone. Even with her own daughter, the odd Thérèse, she was lonely. Watching life with the same passionate intensity with which she had watched the distant figure of O'Hara moving away against the horizon, she had come long ago to understand that loneliness was the curse of those who were free, even of all those who rose a little above the level of ordinary humanity. Looking about her she saw that old John Pentland was lonely, and Olivia, and even her own daughter Thérèse, rambling off independently across the marshes in search of bugs and queer plants. She saw that Anson Pentland was never lonely, for he had his friends who were so like him as to be very nearly indistinguishable, and he had all the traditions and fetishes which he shared with Aunt Cassie. They were part of a fabric, a small corner in the whole tapestry of life, from which they were inseparable.

Of them all, it seemed to her, as she came to see more and more of O'Hara, that he was the most lonely. He had friends, scores, even hundreds of them, in a dozen circles, ranging from the docks where he had spent his boyhood to the world about Durham where there were others who treated

him less coldly than the Pentland family had done. He had friends because there was a quality about him which was irresistible. It lurked somewhere in the depths of the humorous blue eyes and at the corners of the full, rather sensual mouth—a kind of universal sympathy which made him understand the fears, the hopes, the ambitions, the weaknesses of other people. It was that quality, so invaluable in politics, which led enemies unjustly to call him all things to all people. He must have had the gift of friendship, for there were whole sections of Boston which would have followed him anywhere; and yet behind these easy, warm ties there was always a sort of veil shutting him away from them. He had a way of being at home in a barroom or at a hunt breakfast with equal ease, but there was a part of him—the part which was really O'Hara—which the world never saw at all, a strangely warm, romantic, impractical, passionate, headlong, rather unscrupulous Irishman, who lay shut away where none could penetrate. Sabine knew this O'Hara; he had been revealed to her swiftly in a sudden flash at the mention of Olivia Pentland. And afterward when she thought of it, she (Sabine Callendar), who was so hard, so bitter, so unbelieving, surrendered to him as so many had done before her.

Standing there in her sitting-room, so big and powerful and self-reliant, he had seemed suddenly like a little boy, like the little boy whom she had found once late at night long ago, sitting alone and quite still on the curb in front of her house in the Rue de Tilsitt. She had stopped for a moment and watched him, and presently she had approached and asked, "What are you doing here on the curb at this hour of the night?" And the little boy, looking up, had said gravely, "I'm playing."

It had happened years ago—the little boy must have grown into a young man by now—but she remembered him suddenly

during the moment when O'Hara had turned and said to her, "It will mean a great deal to me, more than you can imagine."

O'Hara was like that, she knew—sad and a little lonely, as if in the midst of all his success, with his career and his big new house and his dogs and horses and all the other shiny accoutrements of a gentleman, he had looked up at her and said gravely, "I'm playing."

Long ago Sabine had come to understand that one got a savor out of life by casting overboard all the little rules which clutter up existence, all the ties, and beliefs and traditions in which she had been given a training so intense and severe that in the end she had turned a rebel. Behind all the indifference of countenance and the intricacy of brain, there lay a foundation of immense candor which had driven her to seek her companions, with the directness of an arrow, only among the persons whom she had come to designate as "complete." It was a label which she did not trouble to define to any one, doubting perhaps that any one save herself would find any interest in it; even for herself, it was a label lacking in definiteness. Vaguely she meant by "complete" the persons who stood on their own, who had an existence sufficiently strong to survive the assault or the collapse of any environment, persons who might exist independent of any concrete world, who possessed a proud sense of individuality, who might take root and work out a successful destiny wherever fate chanced to drop them. They were rare, she had come to discover, and yet they existed everywhere, such persons as John Pentland and O'Hara, Olivia and Higgins.

So she had come to seek her life among them, drawing them quietly about her wherever in the world she happened to pause for a time. She did it quietly and without loud cries of "Freedom" and "Free Love" and "The Right to Lead One's Life," for she was enough civilized to understand

the absurdity of making a spectacle in the market-place, and she was too intense an individualist ever to turn missionary. Here perhaps lay her quiet strength and the source of that vague distrust and uneasiness which her presence created in people like Anson and Aunt Cassie. It was unbearable for Aunt Cassie to suspect that Sabine really did not trouble even to scorn her, unbearable to an old woman who had spent all her life in arranging the lives of others to find that a chit of a woman like Sabine could discover in her only a subject of mingled mirth and pity. It was unbearable not to have the power of jolting Sabine out of her serene and insolent indifference, unbearable to know that she was always watching you out of those green eyes, turning you over and over as if you were a bug and finding you in the end an inferior sort of insect. Those who had shared the discovery of her secret were fond of her, and those who had not were bitter against her. And it was, after all, a very simple secret, that one has only to be simple and friendly and human and "complete." She had no patience with sentimentality, and affectation and false piety.

And so the presence of Sabine began slowly to create a vaguely defined rift in a world hitherto set and complacent and even proud of itself. Something in the sight of her cold green eyes, in the sound of her metallic voice, in the sudden shrewd, disillusioning observations which she had a way of making at disconcerting moments, filled people like Aunt Cassie with uneasiness and people like Olivia with a smoldering sense of restlessness and rebellion. Olivia herself became more and more conscious of the difference with the passing of each day into the next and there were times when she suspected that that fierce old man, her father-in-law, was aware of it. It was potent because Sabine was no outsider; the mockery of an outsider would have slipped off the back of the Durham world like arrows off the back of an arma-

dillo. But Sabine was one of them: it was that which made the difference: she was always inside the shell.

4

One hot, breathless night in June Sabine overcame her sense of bored indolence enough to give a dinner at Brook Cottage—a dinner well served, with delicious food, which it might have been said she flung at her guests with a superb air of indifference from the seat at the head of the table, where she sat painted, ugly and magnificently dressed, watching them all in a perverse sort of pleasure. It was a failure as an entertainment, for it had been years since Sabine had given a dinner where the guests were not clever enough to entertain themselves, and now that she was back again in a world where people were invited for every sort of reason save that you really wanted their company, she declined to make any effort. It was a failure, too, because Thérèse, for whom it was given, behaved exactly as she had behaved on the night of the ball. There was an uneasiness and a strain, a sense of awkwardness among the callow young men and a sense of weariness in Sabine and Olivia. O'Hara was there, for Sabine had kept her half-promise; but even he sat quietly, all his boldness and dash vanished before a boyish shyness. The whole affair seemed to be drowned in the lassitude, the enchantment that enveloped the old house on the other bank of the river.

Olivia had come, almost against her will, reduced to a state of exhaustion after a long call from Aunt Cassie on the subject of the rumored affair between Sybil and their Irish neighbor. And when they rose, she slipped quietly away into the garden, because she could not bear the thought of making strained and artificial conversation. She wanted, horribly, to be left in peace.

It was a superb night—hot, as a summer night should be—but clear, too, so that the whole sky was like a sapphire dome studded with diamonds. At the front of the cottage, beyond the borders of the little terraced garden, the marshes spread their dark carpet toward the distant dunes, which with the descent of darkness had turned dim and blue against the purer white of the line made by the foaming surf. The feel of the damp thick grass against the sole of her silver slippers led her to stop for a moment, breathing deeply, and filled her with a mild, half-mystical desire to blend herself into all the beauty that surrounded her, into the hot richness of the air, the scents of the opening blossoms and of pushing green stems, into the grass and the sea and the rich-smelling marshes, to slip away into a state which was nothing and yet everything, to float into eternity. She had abruptly an odd, confused sense of the timelessness of all these forces and sensations, of the sea and the marshes, the pushing green stems and the sapphire dome powdered with diamonds above her head. She saw for the first time in all her existence the power of something which went on and on, ignoring pitiful small creatures like herself and all those others in the cottage behind her, a power which ignored cities and armies and nations, which would go on and on long after the grass had blanketed the ruins of the old house at Pentland. It was sweeping past her, leaving her stranded somewhere in the dull backwaters. She wanted suddenly, fiercely, to take part in all the great spectacle of eternal fertility, a mystery which was stronger than any of them or all of them together, a force which in the end would crush all their transient little prides and beliefs and traditions.

And then she thought, as if she were conscious of it for the first time, "I am tired, tired to death, and a little mad."

Moving across the damp grass she seated herself on a stone bench which O'Hara had placed beneath one of the ancient

apple-trees left standing from the orchard which had covered all the land about Brook Cottage in the days when Savina Pentland was still alive; and for a long time (she never knew how long) she remained there lost in one of those strange lapses of consciousness when one is neither awake nor asleep but in the vague borderland where there is no thought, no care, no troubles. And then slowly she became aware of some one standing there quite near her, beneath the ancient, gnarled tree. As if the presence were materialized somehow out of a dream, she noticed first the faint, insinuating masculine odor of cigar-smoke blending itself with the scent of the growing flowers in Sabine's garden, and then turning she saw a black figure which she recognized at once as that of O'Hara. There was no surprise in the sight of him; it seemed in a queer way as if she had been expecting him.

As she turned, he moved toward her and spoke. "Our garden has flourished, hasn't it?" he asked. "You'd never think it was only a year old."

"Yes," she said. "It has flourished marvelously." And then, after a little pause, "How long have you been standing there?"

"Only a moment. I saw you come out of the house." They listened for a time to the distant melancholy pounding of the surf, and presently he said softly, with a kind of awe in his voice: "It is a marvelous night . . . a night full of splendor."

She made an effort to answer him, but somehow she could think of nothing to say. The remark, uttered so quietly, astonished her, because she had never thought of O'Hara as one who would be sensitive to the beauty of a night. It was too dark to distinguish his face, but she kept seeing him as she remembered him, seeing him, too, as the others thought of him—rough and vigorous but a little common, with the

scar on his temple and the intelligent blue eyes, and the springy walk, so unexpectedly easy and full of grace for a man of his size. No, one might as well have expected little Higgins the groom to say: "It is a night full of splendor." The men she knew—Anson's friends—never said such things. She doubted whether they would ever notice such a night, and if they did notice it, they would be a little ashamed of having done anything so unusual.

"The party is not a great success," he was saying.

"No."

"No one seems to be getting on with any one else. Mrs. Callendar ought not to have asked me. I thought she was shrewder than that."

Olivia laughed softly. "She may have done it on purpose. You can never tell why she does anything."

For a time he remained silent, as if pondering the speech, and then he said, "You aren't cold out here?"

"No, not on a night like this."

There was a silence so long and so vaguely perilous that she felt the need of making some speech, politely and with banality, as if they were two strangers seated in a drawing-room after dinner instead of in the garden which together they had made beneath the ancient apple-trees.

"I keep wondering," she said, "how long it will be until the bungalows of Durham creep down and cover all this land."

"They won't, not so long as I own land between Durham and the sea."

In the darkness she smiled at the thought of an Irish Roman Catholic politician as the protector of this old New England countryside, and aloud she said, "You're growing to be like all the others. You want to make the world stand still."

"Yes, I can see that it must seem funny to you." There

was no bitterness in his voice, but only a sort of hurt, which again astonished her, because it was impossible to think of O'Hara as one who could be hurt.

"There will always be the Pentland house, but, of course, all of us will die some day and then what?"

"There will always be our children."

She was aware slowly of slipping back into that world of cares and troubles behind her from which she had escaped a little while before. She said, "*You* are looking a long way into the future."

"Perhaps, but I mean to have children one day. And at Pentlands there is always Sybil, who will fight for it fiercely. She'll never give it up."

"But it's Jack who will own it, and I'm not so sure about him."

Unconsciously she sighed, knowing now that she was pretending again, being dishonest. She was pretending again that Jack would live to have Pentlands for his own, that he would one day have children who would carry it on. She kept saying to herself, "It is only the truth that can save us all." And she knew that O'Hara understood her feeble game of pretending. She knew because he stood there silently, as if Jack were already dead, as if he understood the reason for the faint bitter sigh and respected it.

"You see a great deal of Sybil, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes, she is a good girl. One can depend on her."

"Perhaps if she had a little of Thérèse or Mrs. Callendar in her, she'd be safer from being hurt."

He did not answer her at once, but she knew that in the darkness he was standing there, watching her.

"But that was a silly thing to say," she murmured. "I don't suppose you know what I mean."

He answered her quickly. "I do know exactly. I know and I'm sure Mrs. Callendar knows. We've both learned

to save ourselves—not in the same school, but the same lesson, nevertheless. But as to Sybil, I think that depends upon whom she marries.”

(“So now,” thought Olivia, “it is coming. It is Sybil whom he loves. He wants to marry her. That is why he has followed me out here.”) She was back again now, solidly enmeshed in all the intricacies of living. She had a sudden, shameful, twinge of jealousy for Sybil, who was so young, who had pushed her so completely into the past along with all the others at Pentlands.

“I was wondering,” she said, “whether she was not seeing too much of you, whether she might not be a bother.”

“No, she’ll never be that.” And then in a voice which carried a faint echo of humor, he added, “I know that in a moment you are going to ask my intentions.”

“No,” she said, “no”; but she could think of nothing else to say. She felt suddenly shy and awkward and a little idiotic, like a young girl at her first dance.

“I shall tell you what my intentions are,” he was saying, and then he broke off suddenly. “Why is it so impossible to be honest in this world, when we live such a little while? It would be such a different place if we were all honest wouldn’t it?”

He hesitated, waiting for her to answer, and she said, “Yes,” almost mechanically, “very different.”

When he replied there was a faint note of excitement in his voice. It was pitched a little lower and he spoke more quickly. In the darkness she could not see him, and yet she was sharply conscious of the change.

“I’ll tell you, then,” he was saying. “I’ve been seeing a great deal of Sybil in the hope that I should see a little of her mother.”

She did not answer him. She simply sat there, speechless, overcome by confusion, as if she had been a young girl with

her first lover. She was even made a little dizzy by the sound of his voice.

"I have offended you. I'm sorry. I only spoke the truth. There is no harm in that."

With a heroic effort to speak intelligently, she succeeded in saying, "No, I am not offended." (It all seemed such a silly, helpless, pleasant feeling.) "No, I'm not offended. I don't know. . . ."

Of only one thing was she certain; that this strange, dizzy, intoxicated state was like nothing she had ever experienced. It was sinister and overwhelming in a bitter-sweet fashion. She kept thinking, "I can begin to understand how a young girl can be seduced, how she cannot know what she is doing."

"I suppose," he was saying, "that you think me presumptuous."

"No, I only think everything is impossible, insane."

"You think me a kind of ruffian, a bum, an Irishman, a Roman Catholic, some one you have never heard of." He waited, and then added: "I *am* all that, from one point of view."

"No, I don't think that; I don't think that."

He sat down beside her quietly on the stone bench. "You have every right to think it," he continued softly. "Every right in the world, and still things like that make no difference, nothing makes any difference."

"My father," she said softly, "was a man very like you. His enemies sometimes used to call him 'shanty Irish.' . . ."

She knew all the while that she should have risen and sought indignant refuge in the house. She knew that perhaps she was being absurd, and yet she stayed there quietly. She was so tired and she had waited for so long (she only knew it now in a sudden flash) to have some one talk to her in just this way, as if she were a woman. She needed some one to lean upon, so desperately.

"How can you know me?" she asked out of a vague sense of helplessness. "How can you know anything about me?"

He did not touch her. He only sat there in the darkness, making her feel by a sort of power which was too strong for her, that all he said was terribly the truth.

"I know, I know, all about you, everything. I've watched you. I've understood you, even better than the others. A man whose life has been like mine sees and understands a great deal that others never notice because for him everything depends upon a kind of second sight. It's the one great weapon of the opportunist." There was a silence and he asked, "Can you understand that? It may be hard, because your life has been so different."

"Not so different, as you might think, only perhaps I've made more of a mess of it." And straightening her body, she murmured, "It is foolish of me to let you talk this way."

He interrupted her with a quick burst of almost boyish eagerness. "But you're glad, aren't you? You're glad, all the same, whether you care anything for me or not. You've deserved it for a long time."

She began to cry softly, helplessly, without a sound, the tears running down her cheeks, and she thought, "Now I'm being a supreme fool. I'm pitying myself." But she could not stop.

It appeared that even in the darkness he was aware of her tears, for he chose not to interrupt them. They sat thus for a long time in silence, Olivia conscious with a terrible aching acuteness, of the beauty of the night and finding it all strange and unreal and confused.

"I wanted you to know," he said quietly, "that there was some one near you, some one who worships you, who would give up everything for you." And after a time, "Perhaps we had better go in now. You can go in through the piazza

and powder your nose. I'll go in through the door from the garden."

And as they walked across the damp, scented grass, he said, "It would be pleasant if you would join Sybil and me riding in the morning."

"But I haven't been on a horse in years," said Olivia.

Throughout the rest of the evening, while she sat playing bridge with Sabine and O'Hara and the Mannering boy, her mind kept straying from the game into unaccustomed by-ways. It was not, she told herself, that she was even remotely in love with O'Hara; it was only that some one—a man who was no creature of ordinary attractions—had confessed his admiration for her, and so she felt young and giddy and elated. The whole affair was silly . . . and yet, yet, in a strange way, it was not silly at all. She kept thinking of Anson's remarks about his father and old Mrs. Soames, "It's a silly affair"—and of Sybil saying gravely, "Only not middle-aged, like O'Hara," and it occurred to her at the same time that in all her life she felt really young for the first time. She had been young as she sat on the stone bench under the ancient apple-tree, young in spite of everything.

And aloud she would say, "Four spades," and know at once that she should have made no such bid.

She was unnerved, too, by the knowledge that there were, all the while, two pairs of eyes far more absorbed in her than in the game of bridge—the green ones of Sabine and the bright blue ones of O'Hara. She could not look up without encountering the gaze of one or the other; and to protect herself she faced them with a hard, banal little smile which she put in place in the mechanical way used by Miss Egan. It was the sort of smile which made her face feel

very tired, and for the first time she had a half-comic flash of pity for Miss Egan. The face of the nurse must at times have grown horribly tired.

The giddiness still clung to her as she climbed into the motor beside Sybil and they drove off down the lane which led from Brook Cottage to Pentlands. The road was a part of a whole tracery of lanes, bordered by hedges and old trees, which bound together the houses of the countryside, and at night they served as a promenade and meeting-place for the servants of the same big houses. One came upon them in little groups of three or four, standing by gates or stone walls, gossiping and giggling together in the darkness, exchanging tales of the life that passed in the houses of their masters, stories of what the old man did yesterday, and how Mrs. So-and-so only took one bath a week. There was a whole world which lay beneath the solid, smooth, monotonous surface that shielded the life of the wealthy, a world which in its way was full of mockery and dark secrets and petty gossip, a world perhaps fuller of truth because it lay hidden, away where none—save perhaps Aunt Cassie, who knew how many fascinating secrets servants had—ever looked, and where there was small need for the sort of pretense which Olivia found so tragic. It circulated the dark lanes at night after the dinners of the neighborhood were finished, and sometimes the noisy echoes of its irreverent mockery rose in wild Irish laughter that echoed back and forth across the mist-hung meadows.

The same lanes were frequented, too, by lovers, who went in pairs instead of groups of three or four, and at times there were echoes of a different sort of merriment—the wild, half-hysterical laughter of some kitchen-maid being wooed roughly and passionately in some dark corner by a

groom or a house-servant. It was a world which blossomed forth only at nightfall. Sometimes in the darkness the masters, motoring home from a ball or a dinner, would come upon an amorous couple, bathed in the sudden brilliant glare of motor-lights, sitting with their arms about each other against a tree, or lying half-hidden among a tangle of hawthorn and elder-bushes.

To-night, as Olivia and Sybil drove in silence along the road, the hot air was filled with the thick scent of the hawthorn-blossoms and the rich, dark odor of cattle, blown toward them across the meadows by the faint salt breeze from the marshes. It was late and the lights of the motor encountered no strayed lovers until at the foot of the hill by the old bridge the glare illuminated suddenly the figures of a man and a woman seated together against the stone wall. At their approach the woman slipped quickly over the wall, and the man, following, leaped lightly as a goat to the top and into the field beyond. Sybil laughed and murmured, "It's Higgins again."

It *was* Higgins. There was no mistaking the stocky, agile figure clad in riding-breeches and sleeveless cotton shirt, and as he leaped the wall the sight of him aroused in Olivia a nebulous, fleeting impression that was like a half-forgotten memory. A startled fawn, she thought, must have scuttled off into the bushes in the same fashion. And she had suddenly that same strange, prickly feeling of terror that had affected Sabine on the night she discovered him hidden in the lilacs watching the ball.

She shivered, and Sybil asked, "You're not cold?"

"No."

She was thinking of Higgins and hoping that this was not the beginning of some new scrape. Once before a girl had come to her in trouble—a Polish girl, whom she helped and sent away because she could not see that forcing Higgins to

marry her would have brought anything but misery for both of them. It never ceased to amaze her that a man so gnarled and ugly, such a savage, hairy little man as Higgins, should have half the girls of the countryside running after him.

In her own room she listened in the darkness until she heard the sound of Jack's gentle breathing and then, after undressing, she sat for a long time at the window looking out across the meadows toward the marshes. There was a subdued excitement which seemed to run through all her body and would not let her sleep. She no longer felt the weariness of spirit which had let her slip during these last few months into a kind of lethargy. She was alive, more alive than she had ever been, even as a young girl; her cheeks were hot and flushed, so that she placed her white hands against them to feel a coolness that was missing from the night air; but they, too, were hot with life.

And as she sat there, the sounds from Sybil's room across the hall died away and at last the night grew still save for the sound of her son's slow breathing and the familiar ghostly creakings of the old house. She was alone now, the only one who was not sleeping; and sitting above the mist-hung meadows she grew more quiet. The warm rich scents of the night drifted in at the window, and again she became aware of a kind of voluptuousness which she had sensed in the air as she sat, hours earlier, on Sabine's terrace above the sea. It had assailed her again as they drove through the lane across the low, marshy pastures by the river. And then in the figure of Higgins, leaping the wall like a goat, it had come with a shock to a sudden climax of feeling, with a sudden acuteness which even terrified her. It still persisted a little, the odd feeling of some tremendous, powerful force

at work all about her, moving swiftly and quietly, thrusting aside and annihilating those who opposed it.

She thought again, "I am a little mad to-night. What has come over me?" And she grew frightened, though it was a different sort of terror from that which afflicted her at the odd moments when she felt all about her the presence of the dead who lived on and on at Pentlands. What she knew now was no terror of the dead; it was rather a terror of warm, passionate life. She thought, "This is what must have happened to the others. This is how they must have felt before they died."

It was not physical death that she meant, but a death somehow of the soul, a death which left behind it such withered people as Aunt Cassie and Anson, the old woman in the north wing, and even a man so rugged and powerful as John Pentland, who had struggled so much more fiercely than the others. And she got a sudden sense of being caught between two dark, struggling forces in fierce combat. It was confused and vague, yet it made her feel suddenly ill in a physical sense. The warm feeling of life and excitement flowed away, leaving her chilled and relaxed, weary all at once, and filled with a soft lassitude, still looking out into the night, still smelling the thick odor of cattle and hawthorn-blossoms.

She never knew whether or not she had fallen asleep in the bergère by the window, but she did know that she was roused abruptly by the sound of footsteps. Outside the door of her room, in the long hallway, there was some one walking, gently, cautiously. It was not this time merely the creaking of the old house; it was the sound of footfalls, regular, measured, inevitable, those of some person of almost no weight at all. She listened, and slowly, cautiously, almost as if the person were blind and groping his way in

the darkness, the step advanced until presently it came opposite her and thin slivers of light outlined the door that led into the hall. Quietly she rose and, still lost in a vague sense of moving in a nightmare, she went over to the door and opened it. Far down the long hall, at the door which opened into the stairway leading to the attic of the house, there was a small circle of light cast by an electric torch. It threw into a black silhouette the figure of an old woman with white hair whom Olivia recognized at once. It was the old woman escaped from the north wing. While she stood watching her, the figure, fumbling at the door, opened it and disappeared quickly into the stairway.

There was no time to be lost, not time even to go in search of the starched Miss Egan. The poor creature might fling herself from the upper windows. So, without stopping even to throw a dressing-gown about her, Olivia went quickly along the dark hall and up the stairway where the fantastic creature in the flowered wrapper had vanished.

The attic was an enormous, unfinished room that covered the whole of the house, a vast cavern of a place, empty save for a few old trunks and pieces of broken furniture. The flotsam and jetsam of Pentland life had been stowed away there, lost and forgotten in the depths of the big room, for more than a century. No one entered it. Since Sybil and Jack had grown, it remained half-forgotten. They had played there on rainy days as small children, and before them Sabine and Anson had played in the same dark, mysterious corners among broken old trunks and sofas and chairs.

Olivia found the place in darkness save for the patches of blue light where the luminous night came in at the double row of dormer windows, and at the far end, by a group of old trunks, the circle of light from the torch that moved this way and that, as if old Mrs. Pentland were searching for something. In the haste of her escape and flight, her

thin white hair had come undone and fell about her shoulders. A sickly smell of medicine hung about her.

Olivia touched her gently and said, "What have you lost, Mrs. Pentland? Can I help you?"

The old woman turned and, throwing the light of the torch full into Olivia's face, stared at her with the round blue eyes, murmuring, "Oh, it's you, Olivia. Then it's all right. Perhaps you can help me."

"What was it you lost? We might look for it in the morning."

"I've forgotten what it was now. You startled me, and you know my poor brain isn't very good, at best. It never has been since I married." Sharply she looked at Olivia. "It didn't affect you that way, did it? You don't ever drift away and feel yourself growing dimmer and dimmer, do you? It's odd. Perhaps it's different with your husband."

Olivia saw that the old woman was having one of those isolated moments of clarity and reason which were more horrible than her insanity because for a time she made you see that, after all, she was like yourself, human and capable of thought. To Olivia these moments were almost as if she witnessed the rising of the dead.

"No," said Olivia. "Perhaps if we went to bed now, you'd remember in the morning."

Old Mrs. Pentland shook her head violently. "No, no, I must find them now. It may be all different in the morning and I won't know anything and that Irish woman won't let me out. Say over the names of a few things like prunes, prisms, persimmons. That's what Mr. Dickens used to have his children do when he couldn't think of a word."

"Let me have the light," said Olivia; "perhaps I can find what it is you want."

With the meekness of a child, the old woman gave her the electric torch and Olivia, turning it this way and that, among

the trunks and old rubbish, made a mock search among the doll-houses and the toy dishes left scattered in the corner of the attic where the children had played house for the last time.

While she searched, the old woman kept up a running comment, half to herself: "It's something I wanted to find very much. It'll make a great difference here in the lives of all of us. I thought I might find Sabine here to help me. She was here yesterday morning, playing with Anson. It rained all day and they couldn't go out. I hid it here yesterday when I came up to see them."

Olivia again attempted wheedling.

"It's late now, Mrs. Pentland. We ought both to be in bed. You try to remember what it is you want, and in the morning I'll come up and find it for you."

For a moment the old woman considered this, and at last she said, "You wouldn't give it to me if you found it. I'm sure you wouldn't. You're too afraid of them all."

"I promise you I will. You can trust me, can't you?"

"Yes, yes, you're the only one who doesn't treat me as if I wasn't quite bright. Yes, I think I can trust you." Another thought occurred to her abruptly. "But I wouldn't remember again. I might forget. Besides, I don't think Miss Egan would let me."

Olivia took one of the thin old hands in hers and said, as if she were talking to a little child, "I know what we'll do. To-morrow you write it out on a bit of paper and then I'll find it and bring it to you."

"I'm sure little Sabine could find it," said the old woman. "She's very good at such things. She's such a clever child."

"I'll go over and fetch Sabine to have her help me."

The old woman looked at her sharply. "You'll promise that?" she asked. "You'll promise?"

"Of course, surely."

"Because all the others are always deceiving me."

And then quite gently she allowed herself to be led across the moonlit patches of the dusty floor, down the stairs and back to her room. In the hall of the north wing they came suddenly upon the starched Miss Egan, all her starch rather melted and subdued now, her red face purple with alarm.

"I've been looking for her everywhere, Mrs. Pentland," she told Olivia. "I don't know how she escaped. She was asleep when I left. I went down to the kitchen for her orange-juice, and while I was gone she disappeared."

It was the old woman who answered. Looking gravely at Olivia, she said, with an air of confidence, "You know I never speak to her at all. She's common. She's a common Irish servant. They can shut me up with her, but they can't make me speak to her." And then she began to drift back again into the hopeless state that was so much more familiar. She began to mumble over and over again a chain of words and names which had no coherence.

Olivia and Miss Egan ignored her, as if part of her—the vaguely *rational* old woman—had disappeared, leaving in her place this pitiful chattering creature who was a stranger.

Olivia explained where it was she found the old woman and why she had gone there.

"She's been talking on the subject for days," said Miss Egan. "I think it's letters that she's looking for, but it may be nothing at all. She mixes everything terribly."

Olivia was shivering now in her nightdress, more from weariness and nerves than from the chill of the night.

"I wouldn't speak of it to any of the others, Miss Egan," she said. "It will only trouble them. And we must be more careful about her in the future."

The old woman had gone past them now, back into the dark room where she spent her whole life, and the nurse had begun to recover a little of her defiant confidence. She

even smiled, the hard, glittering smile which always said, "You cannot do without me, whatever happens."

Aloud she said, "I can't imagine what happened, Mrs. Pentland."

"It was an accident, never mind," said Olivia. "Good-night. Only I think it's better not to speak of what has happened. It will only alarm the others."

But she was puzzled, Olivia, because underneath the dressing-gown Miss Egan had thrown about her shoulders she saw that the nurse was dressed neither in night-clothes nor in her uniform, but in the suit of blue serge that she wore on the rare occasions when she went into the city.

5

She spoke to no one of what had happened, either on the terrace or in the lane or in the depths of the old attic, and the days came to resume again their old monotonous round, as if the strange, hot, disturbing night had had no more existence than a dream. She did not see O'Hara, yet she heard of him, constantly, from Sybil, from Sabine, even from Jack, who seemed stronger than he had ever been and able for a time to go about the farm with his grandfather in the trap drawn by an old white horse. There were moments when it seemed to Olivia that the boy might one day be really well, and yet there was never any real joy in those moments, because always in the back of her mind stood the truth. She knew it would never be, despite all that fierce struggle which she and the old man kept up perpetually against the thing which was stronger than either of them. Indeed, she even found a new sort of sadness in the sight of the pale thin boy and the rugged old man driving along the lanes in the trap, the eyes of the grandfather bright with a look of deluding hope. It was a look which she found un-

bearable because it was the first time in years, almost since that first day when Jack, as a tiny baby who did not cry enough, came into the world, that the expression of the old man had changed from one of grave and uncomplaining resignation.

Sometimes when she watched them together she was filled with a fierce desire to go to John Pentland and tell him that it was not her fault that there were not more children, other heirs to take the place of Jack. She wanted to tell him that she would have had ten children if it were possible, that even now she was still young enough to have more children. She wanted to pour out to him something of that hunger of life which had swept over her on the night in Sabine's garden beneath the apple-tree, a spot abounding in fertility. But she knew, too, how impossible it was to discuss a matter which old John Pentland, in the depths of his soul believed to be "indelicate." Such things were all hidden behind a veil which shut out so much of truth from all their lives. There were times when she fancied he understood it all, those times when he took her hand and kissed her affectionately. She fancied that he understood and that the knowledge lay somehow at the root of the old man's quiet contempt for his own son.

But she saw well enough the tragedy that lay deep down at the root of the whole matter. She understood that it was not Anson who was to blame. It was that they had all been caught in the toils of something stronger than any of them, a force which with a cruel injustice compelled her to live a dry, monotonous, barren existence when she would have embraced life passionately, which compelled her to watch her own son dying slowly before her eyes.

Always she came back to the same thought, that the boy must be kept alive until his grandfather was dead; and sometimes, standing on the terrace, looking out across the fields,

Olivia saw that old Mrs. Soames, dressed absurdly in pink, with a large picture-hat, was riding in the trap with the old man and his grandson, as if in reality she were the grandmother of Jack instead of the mad old woman abovestairs.

The days came to resume their round of dull monotony, and yet there was a difference, odd and indefinable, as if in some way the sun were brighter than it had been, as if those days, when even in the bright sunlight the house had seemed a dull gray place, were gone now. She could no longer look across the meadows toward the bright new chimneys of O'Hara's house without a sudden quickening of breath, a warm pleasant sensation of no longer standing quite alone.

She was not even annoyed any longer by the tiresome daily visits of Aunt Cassie, nor by the old woman's passion for pitying her and making wild insinuations against Sabine and O'Hara and complaining of Sybil riding with him in the mornings over the dew-covered fields. She was able now simply to sit there politely as she had once done, listening while the old woman talked on and on; only now she did not even listen with attention. It seemed to her at times that Aunt Cassie was like some insect beating itself frantically against a pane of glass, trying over and over again with an unflagging futility to enter where it was impossible to enter.

It was Sabine who gave her a sudden glimpse of penetration into this instinct about Aunt Cassie, Sabine who spent all her time finding out about people. It happened one morning that the two clouds of dust, the one made by Aunt Cassie and the other by Sabine, met at the very foot of the long drive leading up to Pentlands, and together the two women—one dressed severely in shabby black, without so much as a fleck of powder on her nose, the other dressed expensively in what some Paris dressmaker chose to call a *costume de sport*, with her face made up like a Parisian—arrived together to sit on the piazza of Pentlands insulting each other subtly for

an hour. When at last Sabine managed to outstay Aunt Cassie (it was always a contest between them, for each knew that the other would attack her as soon as she was out of hearing) she turned to Olivia and said abruptly, "I've been thinking about Aunt Cassie, and I'm sure now of one thing. Aunt Cassie is a virgin!"

There was something so cold-blooded and sudden in the statement that Olivia laughed.

"I'm sure of it," persisted Sabine with quiet seriousness. "Look at her. She's always talking about the tragedy of her being too frail ever to have had children. She never tried. That's the answer. She never tried." Sabine tossed away what remained of the cigarette she had lighted to annoy Aunt Cassie, and continued. "You never knew my Uncle Ned Struthers when he was young. You only knew him as an old man with no spirit left. But he wasn't that way always. It's what she did to him. She destroyed him. He was a full-blooded kind of man who liked drinking and horses and he must have liked women, too, but she cured him of that. He would have liked children, but instead of a wife he only got a woman who couldn't bear the thought of not being married and yet couldn't bear what marriage meant. He got a creature who fainted and wept and lay on a sofa all day, who got the better of him because he was a nice, stupid, chivalrous fellow."

Sabine was launched now with all the passion which seized her when she had laid bare a little patch of life and examined it minutely.

"He didn't even dare to be unfaithful to her. If he looked at another woman she fainted and became deathly ill and made terrible scenes. I can remember some of them. I remember that once he called on Mrs. Soames when she was young and beautiful, and when he came home Aunt Cassie met him in hysterics and told him that if it ever happened

again she would go out, 'frail and miserable as she was,' and commit adultery. I remember the story because I overheard my father telling it when I was a child and I was miserable until I found out what 'committing adultery' meant. In the end she destroyed him. I'm sure of it."

Sabine sat there, with a face like stone, following with her eyes the cloud of dust that moved along the lane as Aunt Cassie progressed on her morning round of visits, a symbol in a way of all the forces that had warped her own existence.

"It's possible," murmured Olivia.

Sabine turned toward her with a quick, sudden movement. "That's why she is always so concerned with the lives of other people. She has never had any life of her own, never. She's always been afraid. It's why she loves the calamities of other people, because she's never had any of her own. Not even her husband's death was a calamity. It left her free, completely free of troubles as she had always wanted to be."

And then a strange thing happened to Olivia. It was as if a new Aunt Cassie had been born, as if the old one, so full of tears and easy sympathy who always appeared miraculously when there was a calamity in the neighborhood, the Aunt Cassie who was famous for her good works and her tears and words of religious counsel, had gone down the lane for the last time, never to return again. To-morrow morning a new Aunt Cassie would arrive, one who outwardly would be the same; only to Olivia she would be different, a woman stripped of all those veils of pretense and emotions with which she wrapped herself, an old woman naked in her ugliness who, Olivia understood in a blinding flash of clarity, was like an insect battering itself against a pane of glass in a futile attempt to enter where it was impossible for her ever to enter. And she was no longer afraid of Aunt Cassie now. She did not even dislike her; she only pitied the old woman

because she had missed so much, because she would die without ever having lived. And she must have been young and handsome once, and very amusing. There were still moments when the old lady's charm and humor and sharp tongue were completely disarming.

Sabine was talking again, in a cold, unrelenting voice. "She lay there all those years on the sofa covered with a shawl, trying to arrange the lives of every one about her. She killed Anson's independence and ruined my happiness. She terrorized her husband until in the end he died to escape her. He was a good-natured man, horrified of scenes and scandals." Sabine lighted a cigarette and flung away the match with a sudden savage gesture. "And now she goes about like an angel of pity, a very brisk angel of pity, a harpy in angel's clothing. She has played her rôle well. Every one believes in her as a frail, good, unhappy woman. Some of the saints must have been very like her. Some of them must have been trying old maids."

She rose and, winding the chiffon scarf about her throat, opened her yellow parasol, saying, "I know I'm right. She's a virgin. At least," she added, "in the technical sense, she's a virgin. I know nothing about her mind."

And then, changing abruptly, she said, "Will you go up to Boston with me to-morrow? I'm going to do something about my hair. There's gray beginning to come into it."

Olivia did not answer her at once, but when she did speak it was to say, "Yes; I'm going to take up riding again and I want to order clothes. My old ones would look ridiculous now. It's been years since I was on a horse."

Sabine looked at her sharply and, looking away again, said, "I'll stop for you about ten o'clock."

CHAPTER VI

HEAT, damp and overwhelming, and thick with the scent of fresh-cut hay and the half-fetid odor of the salt marshes, settled over Durham, reducing all life to a state of tropical relaxation. Even in the mornings when Sybil rode with O'Hara across the meadows, there was no coolness and no dew on the grass. Only Aunt Cassie, thin and wiry, and Anson, guided perpetually by a sense of duty which took no reckoning of such things as weather, resisted the muggy warmth. Aunt Cassie, alike indifferent to heat and cold, storm or calm, continued her indefatigable rounds. Sabine, remarking that she had always known that New England was the hottest place this side of Sheol, settled into a state of complete inertia, not stirring from the house until after the sun had disappeared. Even then her only action was to come to Pentlands to sit in the writing-room playing bridge languidly with Olivia and John Pentland and old Mrs. Soames.

The old lady grew daily more dazed and forgetful and irritating as a fourth at bridge. John Pentland always insisted upon playing with her, saying that they understood each other's game; but he deceived no one, save Mrs. Soames, whose wits were at best a little dim; the others knew that it was to protect her. They saw him sit calmly and patiently while she bid suits she could not possibly make, while she trumped his tricks and excused herself on the ground of bad eyesight. She had been a great beauty once and she was still, with all her paint and powder, a vain woman. She would not wear spectacles and so played by looking through lorgnettes, which lowered the whole tempo of the game and

added to the confusion. At times, in the midst of the old lady's blunders, a look of murder came into the green eyes of Sabine, but Olivia managed somehow to prevent any outburst; she even managed to force Sabine into playing on, night after night. The patience and tenderness of the old man towards Mrs. Soames moved her profoundly, and she fancied that Sabine, too,—hard, cynical, intolerant Sabine—was touched by it. There was a curious, unsuspected soft spot in Sabine, as if in some way she understood the bond between the two old people. Sabine, who allowed herself to be bored by no one, presently became willing to sit there night after night bearing this special boredom patiently.

Once when Olivia said to her, "We'll all be old some day. Perhaps we'll be worse than old Mrs. Soames," Sabine replied with a shrug of bitterness, "Old age is a bore. That's the trouble with us, Olivia. We'll never give up and become old ladies. It used to be the beauties who clung to youth, and now all of us do it. We'll probably be painted old horrors . . . like her."

"Perhaps," replied Olivia, and a kind of terror took possession of her at the thought that she would be forty on her next birthday and that nothing lay before her, even in the immediate future, save evenings like these, playing bridge with old people until presently she herself was old, always in the melancholy atmosphere of the big house at Pentlands.

"But I shan't take to drugs," said Sabine. "At least I shan't do that."

Olivia looked at her sharply. "Who takes drugs?" she asked.

"Why, she does . . . old Mrs. Soames. She's taken drugs for years. I thought every one knew it."

"No," said Olivia sadly. "I never knew it."

Sabine laughed. "You are an innocent," she answered.

And after Sabine had gone home, the cloud of melancholy

clung to her for hours. She felt suddenly that Anson and Aunt Cassie might be right, after all. There was something dangerous in a woman like Sabine, who tore aside every veil, who sacrificed everything to her passion for the truth. Somehow it riddled a world which at its best was not too cheerful.

There were evenings when Mrs. Soames sent word that she was feeling too ill to play, and on those occasions John Pentland drove over to see her, and the bridge was played instead at Brook Cottage with O'Hara and a fourth recruited impersonally from the countryside. To Sabine, the choice was a matter of indifference so long as the chosen one could play well.

It happened on these occasions that O'Hara and Olivia came to play together, making a sort of team, which worked admirably. He played as she knew he would play, aggressively and brilliantly, with a fierce concentration and a determination to win. It fascinated her that a man who had spent most of his life in circles where bridge played no part, should have mastered the intricate game so completely. She fancied him taking lessons with the same passionate application which he had given to his career.

He did not speak to her again of the things he had touched upon during that first hot night on the terrace, and she was careful never to find herself alone with him. She was ashamed at the game she played—of seeing him always with Sabine or riding with Sybil and giving him no chance to speak; it seemed to her that such behavior was cheap and dishonest. Yet she could not bring herself to refuse seeing him, partly because to refuse would have aroused the suspicions of the already interested Sabine, but more because she *wanted* to see him. She found a kind of delight in the way he looked at her, in the perfection with which they came to

understand each other's game; and though he did not see her alone, he kept telling her in a hundred subtle ways that he was a man in love, who adored her.

She told herself that she was behaving like a silly school-girl, but she could not bring herself to give him up altogether. It seemed to her unbearable that she should lose these rare happy evenings. And she was afraid, too, that Sabine would call her a fool.

As early summer turned into July, old Mrs. Soames came less and less frequently to play bridge and there were times when Sabine, dining out or retiring early, left them without any game at all and the old familiar stillness came to settle over the drawing-room at Pentlands . . . evenings when Olivia and Sybil played double patience and Anson worked at Mr. Lowell's desk over the mazes of the Pentland Family history.

On one of these evenings, when Olivia's eyes had grown weary of reading, she closed her book and, turning toward her husband, called his name. When he did not answer her at once she spoke to him again, and waited until he looked up. Then she said, "Anson, I have taken up riding again. I think it is doing me good."

But Anson, lost somewhere in the chapter about Savina Pentland and her friendship with Ingres, was not interested and made no answer.

"I go in the mornings," she repeated, "before breakfast, with Sybil."

Anson said, "Yes," again, and then, "I think it an excellent idea—your color is better," and went back to his work.

So she succeeded in telling him that it was all right about Sybil and O'Hara. She managed to tell him without actually

saying it that she would go with them and prevent any entanglement. She had told him, too, without once alluding to the scene of which he was ashamed. And she knew, of course, now, that there was no danger of any entanglement, at least not one which involved Sybil.

Sitting with the book closed in her lap, she remained for a time watching the back of her husband's head—the thin gray hair, the cords that stood out weakly under the desiccated skin, the too small ears set too close against the skull; and in reality, all the while she was seeing another head set upon a full muscular neck, the skin tanned and glowing with the flush of health, the thick hair short and vigorous; and she felt an odd, inexplicable desire to weep, thinking at the same time, "I am a wicked woman. I must be really bad." For she had never known before what it was to be in love and she had lived for nearly twenty years in a family where love had occupied a poor forgotten niche.

She was sitting thus when John Pentland came in at last, looking more yellow and haggard than he had been in days. She asked him quietly, so as not to disturb Anson, whether Mrs. Soames was really ill. "No," said the old man, "I don't think so; she seems all right, a little tired, that's all. We're all growing old."

He seated himself and began to read like the others, pretending clearly an interest which he did not feel, for Olivia caught him suddenly staring before him in a line beyond the printed page. She saw that he was not reading at all, and in the back of her mind a little cluster of words kept repeating themselves—"*a little tired, that's all, we're all growing old; a little tired, that's all, we're all growing old*"—over and over again monotonously, as if she were hypnotizing herself. She found herself, too, staring into space in the same enchanted fashion as the old man. And then, all at once, she became aware of a figure standing in the doorway

beckoning to her, and, focusing her gaze, she saw that it was Nannie, clad in a dressing-gown, her old face screwed up in an expression of anxiety. She had some reason for not disturbing the others, for she did not speak. Standing in the shadow, she beckoned; and Olivia, rising quietly, went out into the hall, closing the door behind her.

There, in the dim light, she saw that the old woman had been crying and was shaking in fright. She said, "Something had happened to Jack, something dreadful."

She had known what it was before Nannie spoke. It seemed to her that she had known all along, and now there was no sense of shock but only a hard, dead numbness of all feeling.

"Call up Doctor Jenkins," she said, with a kind of dreadful calm, and turning away she went quickly up the long stairs.

In the darkness of her own room she did not wait now to listen for the sound of breathing. It had come at last—the moment when she would enter the room and, listening for the sound, encounter only the stillness of the night. Beyond, in the room which he had occupied ever since he was a tiny baby, there was the usual dim night-light burning in the corner, and by its dull glow she was able to make out the narrow bed and his figure lying there as it had always lain, asleep. He must have been asleep, she thought, for it was impossible to have died so quietly, without moving. But she knew, of course, that he *was* dead, and she saw how near to death he had always been, how it was only a matter of slipping over, quite simply and gently.

He had escaped them at last—his grandfather and herself—in a moment when they had not been there watching; and belowstairs in the drawing-room John Pentland was sitting

with a book in his lap by Mr. Longfellow's lamp, staring into space, still knowing nothing. And Anson's pen scratched away at the history of the Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, while here in the room where she stood the Pentland family had come to an end.

She did not weep. She knew that weeping would come later, after the doctor had made his silly futile call to tell her what she already knew. And now that this thing which she had fought for so long had happened, she was aware of a profound peace. It seemed to her even, that the boy, her own son, was happier now; for she had a fear, bordering upon remorse, that they had kept him alive all those years against his will. He looked quiet and still now and not at all as he had looked on those long, terrible nights when she had sat in this same chair by the same bed while, propped among pillows because he could not breathe lying down, he fought for breath and life, more to please her and his grandfather than because he wanted to live. She saw that there could be a great beauty in death. It was not as if he had died alone. He had simply gone to sleep.

She experienced, too, an odd and satisfying feeling of reality, of truth, as if in some way the air all about her had become cleared and freshened. Death was not a thing one could deny by pretense. Death was real. It marked the end of something, definitely and clearly for all time. There could be no deceptions about death.

She wished now that she had told Nannie not to speak to the others. She wanted to stay there alone in the dimly lighted room until the sky turned gray beyond the marshes.

They did not leave her in peace with her son. There came first of all a knock which admitted old Nannie, still trembling and hysterical, followed by the starched and effi-

cient Miss Egan, who bustled about with a hard, professional manner, and then the rattling, noisy sounds of Doctor Jenkins' Ford as he arrived from the village, and the far-off hoot of a strange motor-horn and a brilliant glare of light as a big motor rounded the corner of the lane at the foot of the drive and swept away toward Brook Cottage. The hall seemed suddenly alive with people, whispering and murmuring together, and there was a sound of hysterical sobbing from some frightened servant. Death, which ought to occur in the quiet beauty of solitude, was being robbed of all its dignity. They would behave like this for days. She knew that it was only now, in the midst of all that pitiful hubbub, that she had lost her son. He had been hers still, after a fashion, while she was alone there in the room.

Abruptly, in the midst of the flurry, she remembered that there were others besides herself. There was Sybil, who had come in and stood beside her, grave and sympathetic, pressing her mother's hand in silence; and Anson, who stood helplessly in the corner, more awkward and useless and timid than ever in the face of death. But most of all, there was John Pentland. He was not in the room. He was nowhere to be seen.

She went to search for him, because she knew that he would never come there to face all the others; instead, he would hide himself away like a wounded animal. She knew that there was only one person whom he could bear to see. Together they had fought for the life of the boy and together they must face the cold, hard fact of his death.

She found him standing on the terrace, outside the tall windows that opened into the drawing-room, and as she approached, she saw that he was so lost in his sorrow that he did not even notice her. He was like a man in a state of enchantment. He simply stood there, tall and stiff and austere, staring across the marshes in the direction of the

sea, alone as he had always been, surrounded by the tragic armor of loneliness that none of them, not even herself, had ever succeeded in piercing. She saw then that there was a grief more terrible than her own. She had lost her son but for John Pentland it was the end of everything. She saw that the whole world had collapsed about him. It was as if he, too, had died.

She did not speak to him at first, but simply stood beside him, taking his huge, bony hand in hers, aware that he did not look at her, but kept staring on and on across the marshes in the direction of the sea. And at last she said softly, "It has happened, at last."

Still he did not look at her, but he did answer, saying, "I knew," in a whisper that was barely audible. There were tears on his leathery old cheeks. He had come out into the darkness of the scented garden to weep. It was the only time that she had ever seen tears in the burning black eyes.

Not until long after midnight did all the subdued and vulgar hubbub that surrounds death fade away once more into silence, leaving Olivia alone in the room with Sybil. They did not speak to each other, for they knew well enough the poverty of words, and there was between them no need for speech.

At last Olivia said, "You had best get some sleep, darling; to-morrow will be a troublesome day."

And then, like a little girl, Sybil came over and seating herself on her mother's lap put her arms about her neck and kissed her.

The girl said softly, "You are wonderful, Mother. I know that I'll never be so wonderful a woman. We should have spared you to-night, all of us, and instead of that, it was you who managed everything." Olivia only kissed her

and even smiled a little at Sybil. "I think he's happier. He'll never be tired again as he used to be."

She had risen to leave when both of them heard, far away, somewhere in the distance, the sound of music. It came to them vaguely and in snatches borne in by the breeze from the sea, music that was filled with a wild, barbaric beat, that rose and fell with a passionate sense of life. It seemed to Olivia that there was in the sound of it some dark power which, penetrating the stillness of the old house, shattered the awesome silence that had settled down at last with the approach of death. It was as if life were celebrating its victory over death, in a savage, wild, exultant triumph.

It was music, too, that sounded strange and passionate in the thin, clear air of the New England night, such music as none of them had ever heard there before; and slowly, as it rose to a wild crescendo of sound, Olivia recognized it—the glowing barbaric music of the tribal dances in *Prince Igor*, being played brilliantly with a sense of abandoned joy.

At the same moment Sybil looked at her mother and said, "It's Jean de Cyon. . . . I'd forgotten that he was arriving to-night." And then sadly, "Of course he doesn't know."

There was a sudden light in the girl's eye, the merest flicker, dying out again quickly, which had a strange, intimate relation to the passionate music. Again it was life triumphing in death. Long afterward Olivia remembered it well . . . the light of something which went on and on.

CHAPTER VII

I

THE news reached Aunt Cassie only the next morning at ten and it brought her, full of reproaches and tears, over the dusty lanes to Pentlands. She was hurt, she said, because they had not let her know at once. "I should have risen from my bed and come over immediately," she repeated. "I was sleeping verv badly, in any case. I could have managed everything. You should have sent for Aunt Cassie at once."

And Olivia could not tell her that they had kept her in ignorance for that very reason—because they knew she *would* rise from her bed and come over at once.

Aunt Cassie it was who took the burden of the grief upon her narrow shoulders. She wept in the manner of a professional mourner. She drew the shades in the drawing-room, because in her mind death was not respectable unless the rooms were darkened, and sat there in a corner receiving callers, as if she were the one most bereft, as if indeed she were the only one who suffered at all. She returned to her own cupolaed dwelling only late at night and took all her meals at Pentlands, to the annoyance of her brother, who on the second day in the midst of lunch turned to her abruptly and said: "Cassie, if you can't stop this eternal blubbering, I wish you'd eat at home. It doesn't help anything."

At which she had risen from the table, in a sudden climax of grief and persecution, to flee, sobbing and hurt, from the room. But she was not insulted sufficiently to take her meals

at home. She stayed on at Pentlands because, she said, "They needed some one like me to help out. . . ." And to the trembling, inefficient Miss Peavey, who came and went like a frightened rabbit on errands for her, she confided her astonishment that her brother and Olivia should treat death with such indifference. They did not weep; they showed no signs of grief. She was certain that they lacked sensibility. They did not feel the tragedy. And, weeping again, she would launch into memories of the days when the boy had come as a little fellow to sit, pale and listless, on the floor of her big, empty drawing-room, turning the pages of the Doré Bible.

And to Miss Peavey she also said, "It's at times like this that one's breeding comes out. Olivia has failed for the first time. She doesn't understand the things one must do at a time like this. If she had been brought up properly, here among us. . . ."

For with Aunt Cassie death was a mechanical, formalized affair which one observed by a series of traditional gestures.

It was a remarkable bit of luck, she said, that Bishop Smallwood (Sabine's Apostle to the Genteel) was still in the neighborhood and could conduct the funeral services. It was proper that one of Pentland blood should bury a Pentland (as if no one else were quite worthy of such an honor). And she went to see the Bishop to discuss the matter of the services. She planned that immensely intricate affair, the seating of relations and connections—all the Canes and Struthers and Mannerings and Sutherlands and Pentlands—at the church. She called on Sabine to tell her that whatever her feelings about funerals might be, it was her duty to attend this one. Sabine must remember that she was back again in a world of civilized people who behaved as ladies and gentlemen. And to each caller whom she received in the darkened drawing-room, she confided the fact that Sabine must be an unfeeling, inhuman creature, because she had not even paid a visit to Pentlands.

But she did not know what Olivia and John Pentland knew—that Sabine had written a short, abrupt, almost incoherent note, with all the worn, tattered, pious old phrases missing, which had meant more to them than any of the cries and whispering and confusion that went on belowstairs, where the whole countryside passed in and out in an endless procession.

When Miss Peavey was not at hand to run errands for her, she made Anson her messenger. . . . Anson, who wandered about helpless and lost and troubled because death had interrupted the easy, effortless flow of a life in which usually all moved according to a set plan. Death had upset the whole household. It was impossible to know how Anson Pentland felt over the death of his son. He did not speak at all, and now that "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony" had been laid aside in the midst of the confusion and Mr. Lowell's desk stood buried beneath floral offerings, there was nothing to do but wander about getting in the way of every one and drawing upon his head the sharp reproofs of Aunt Cassie.

It was Aunt Cassie and Anson who opened the great box of roses that came from O'Hara. It was Aunt Cassie's thin, blue-veined hand that tore open the envelope addressed plainly to "Mrs. Anson Pentland." It was Aunt Cassie who forced Anson to read what was written inside:

"Dear Mrs. Pentland,

You know what I feel. There is no need to say anything more.

Michael O'Hara."

And it was Aunt Cassie who said, "Impertinent! Why should he send flowers at all?" And Aunt Cassie who read the note again and again, as if she might find in some way a veiled meaning behind the two cryptic sentences. It was Aunt

Cassie who carried the note to Olivia and watched her while she read it and laid it quietly aside on her dressing-table. And when she had discovered nothing she said to Olivia, "It seems to me impertinent of him to send flowers and write such a note. What is he to us here at Pentlands?"

Olivia looked at her a little wearily and said, "What does it matter whether he is impertinent or not? Besides, he was a great friend of Jack's." And then, straightening her tired body, she looked at Aunt Cassie and said slowly, "He is also a friend of mine."

It was the first time that the division of forces had stood revealed, even for a second, the first time that Olivia had shown any feeling for O'Hara, and there was something ominous in the quietness of a speech made so casually. She ended any possible discussion by leaving the room in search of Anson, leaving Aunt Cassie disturbed by the sensation of alarm which attacked her when she found herself suddenly face to face with the mysterious and perilous calm that sometimes took possession of Olivia. Left alone in the room, she took up the note again from the dressing-table and read it through for the twentieth time. There was nothing in it . . . nothing on which one could properly even pin a suspicion.

So, in the midst of death, enveloped by the odor of tuberoses, the old lady rose triumphant, a phoenix from ashes. In some way she found in tragedy her proper rôle and she managed to draw most of the light from the other actors to herself. She must have known that people went away from the house saying, "Cassie rises to such occasions beautifully. She has taken everything on her own shoulders." She succeeded in conveying the double impression that she suffered far more than any of the others and that none of the others could possibly have done without her.

And then into the midst of her triumph came the worst that could have happened. Olivia was the first to learn of the

calamity as she always came to know before any of the others knowledge which old John Pentland possessed; and the others would never have known until the sad business of the funeral was over save for Aunt Cassie's implacable curiosity.

On the second day, Olivia, summoned by her father-in-law to come to the library, found him there as she had found him so many times before, grim and silent and repressed, only this time there was something inexpressibly tragic and broken in his manner.

She did not speak to him; she simply waited until, looking up at last, he said almost in a whisper, "Horace Pentland's body is at the Durham station."

And he looked at her with the quick, pitiful helplessness of a strong man who has suddenly grown weak and old, as if at last he had come to the end of his strength and was turning now to her. It was then for the first time that she began to see how she was in a way a prisoner, that from now on, as one day passed into another, the whole life at Pentlands would come to be more and more her affair. There was no one to take the place of the old man . . . no one, save herself.

"What shall we do?" he asked in the same low voice. "I don't know. I am nearly at the end of things."

"We could bury them together," said Olivia softly. "We could have a double funeral."

He looked at her in astonishment. "You wouldn't mind that?" and when she shook her head in answer, he replied: "But we can't do it. There seems to me something wrong in such an idea. . . . I can't explain what I mean. . . . It oughtn't to be done. . . . A boy like Jack and an old reprobate like Horace."

They would have settled it quietly between them as they had settled so many troubles in the last years when John Pentland had come to her for strength, but at that moment the door opened suddenly and, without knocking, Aunt Cassie

appeared, her eyes really blazing with an angry, hysterical light, her hair all hanging in little iron-gray wisps about her narrow face.

"What is it?" she asked. "What has gone wrong? I know there's something, and you've no right to keep it from me." She was shrill and brittle, as if in those two days all the pleasure and activity surrounding death had driven her into an orgy of excitement. At the sound of her voice, both Olivia and John Pentland started abruptly. She had touched them on nerves raw and worn.

The thin, high-pitched voice went on. "I've given up all my time to arranging things. I've barely slept. I sacrifice myself to you all day and night and I've a right to know." It was as if she had sensed the slow breaking up of the old man and sought now to hurl him aside, to depose him as head of the family, in one great *coup d'état*, setting herself up there in his place, a thin, fiercely intolerant tyrant; as if at last she had given up her old subtle way of trying to gain her ends by intrigue through the men of the family. She stood ready now to set up a matriarchy, the last refuge of a family whose strength was gone. She had risen thus in the same way once before within the memory of Olivia, in those long months when Mr. Struthers, fading slowly into death, yielded her the victory.

John Pentland sighed, profoundly, wearily, and murmured, "It's nothing, Cassie. It would only trouble you. Olivia and I are settling it."

But she did not retreat. Standing there, she held her ground and continued the tirade, working herself up to a pitch of hysteria. "I won't be put aside. No one ever tells me anything. For years now I've been shut out as if I were half-witted. Frail as I am, I work myself to the bone for the family and don't even get a word of thanks. . . . Why is Olivia always preferred to your own sister?" And

tears of luxurious, sensual, self-pity began to stream down her withered face. She began even to mumble and mix her words, and she abandoned herself completely to the fleshly pleasure of hysterics.

Olivia, watching her quietly, saw that this was no usual occasion. This was, in truth, the new Aunt Cassie whom Sabine had revealed to her a few days before . . . the aggressively virginal Aunt Cassie who had been born in that moment on the terrace to take the place of the old Aunt Cassie who had existed always in an aura of tears and good works and sympathy. She understood now what she had never understood before—that Aunt Cassie was not merely an irrational hypochondriac, a harmless, pitiful creature, but a ruthless and unscrupulous force. She knew that behind this emotional debauch there lay some deeply conceived plan. Vaguely she suspected that the plan was aimed at subduing herself, or bringing her (Olivia) completely under the will of the old woman. It was the insect again beating its wings frantically against the windows of a world which she could never enter. . . .

And softly Olivia said, "Surely, Aunt Cassie, there is no need to make a scene . . . there's no need to be vulgar . . . at a time like this."

The old woman, suddenly speechless, looked at her brother, but from him there came no sign of aid or succor; she must have seen, plainly, that he had placed himself on the side of Olivia . . . the outsider, who had dared to accuse a Pentland of being vulgar.

"You heard what she said, John. . . . You heard what she said! She called your sister vulgar!" But her hysterical mood began to abate suddenly, as if she saw that she had chosen, after all, the wrong plan of attack. Olivia did not answer her. She only sat there, looking pale and patient and beautiful in her black clothes, waiting. It was a moment

unfair to Aunt Cassie. No man, even Anson, would have placed himself against Olivia just then.

"If you must know, Cassie . . ." the old man said slowly. "It's a thing you won't want to hear. But if you must know, it is simply that Horace Pentland's body is at the station in Durham."

Olivia had a quick sense of the whited sepulcher beginning to crack, to fall slowly into bits.

At first Aunt Cassie only stared at them, snuffing and wiping her red eyes, and then she said, in an amazingly calm voice, "You see. . . . You never tell me anything. I never knew he was dead." There was a touch of triumph and vindication in her manner.

"There was no need of telling you, Cassie," said the old man. "You wouldn't let his name be spoken in the family for years. It was you—you and Anson—who made me threaten him into living abroad. Why should you care when he died?"

Aunt Cassie showed signs of breaking down once more. "You see, I'm always blamed for everything. I was thinking of the family all these years. We couldn't have Horace running around loose in Boston." She broke off with a sudden, fastidious gesture of disgust, as if she were washing her hands of the whole affair. "I could have managed it better myself. He ought never to have been brought home . . . to stir it all up again."

Still Olivia kept silent and it was the old man who answered Aunt Cassie. "He wanted to be buried here. . . . He wrote to ask me, when he was dying."

"He had no right to make such a request. He forfeited all rights by his behavior. I say it again and I'll keep on saying it. He ought never to have been brought back here . . . after people even forgot whether he was alive or dead."

The perilous calm had settled over Olivia. . . . She had

been looking out of the window across the marshes into the distance, and when she turned she spoke with a terrible quietness. She said: "You may do with Horace Pentland's body what you like. It is more your affair than mine, for I never saw him in my life. But it is *my* son who is dead . . . *my* son, who belongs to *me* more than to any of you. You may bury Horace Pentland on the same day . . . at the same service, even in the same grave. Things like that can't matter very much after death. You can't go on pretending forever. . . . Death is too strong for that. It's stronger than any of us puny creatures because it's the one truth we can't avoid. It's got nothing to do with prejudices and pride and respectability. In a hundred years—even in a year, in a month, what will it matter what we've done with Horace Pentland's body?"

She rose, still enveloped in the perilous calm, and said: "I'll leave Horace Pentland to you two. There is none of his blood in my veins. Whatever you do, I shall not object . . . only I wouldn't be too shabby in dealing with death."

She went out, leaving Aunt Cassie exhausted and breathless and confused. The old woman had won her battle about the burial of Horace Pentland, yet she had suffered a great defeat. She must have seen that she had really lost everything, for Olivia somehow had gone to the root of things, in the presence of John Pentland, who was himself so near to death. (Olivia daring to say proudly, as if she actually scorned the Pentland name, "There is none of his blood in my veins.")

But it was a defeat which Olivia knew she would never admit: that was one of the qualities which made it impossible to deal with Aunt Cassie. Perhaps, even as she sat there dabbling at her eyes, she was choosing new weapons for a struggle which had come at last into the open because it was impossible any longer to do battle through so weak and shifting an ally as Anson.

She was a natural martyr, Aunt Cassie. Martyrdom was

the great feminine weapon of her Victorian day and she was practised in it; she had learned all its subtleties in the years she had lain wrapped in a shawl on a sofa subduing the full-blooded Mr. Struthers.

And Olivia knew as she left the room that in the future she would have to deal with a poor, abused, invalid aunt who gave all her strength in doing good works and received in return only cruelty and heartlessness from an outsider, from an intruder, a kind of adventuress who had wormed her way into the heart of the Pentland family. Aunt Cassie, by a kind of art of which she possessed the secret, would somehow make it all seem so.

2

The heat did not go away. It hung in a quivering cloud over the whole countryside, enveloping the black procession which moved through the lanes into the highroad and thence through the clusters of ugly stucco bungalows inhabited by the mill-workers, on its way past the deserted meeting-house where Preserved Pentland had once harangued a tough and sturdy congregation and the Rev. Josiah Milford had set out with his flock for the Western Reserve. . . . It enveloped the black, slow-moving procession to the very doors of the cool, ivy-covered stone church (built like a stage piece to imitate some English county church) where the Pentlands worshiped the more polite, compromising gods scorned and berated by the witch-burner. On the way, beneath the elms of High Street, Polish women and children stopped to stare and cross themselves at the sight of the grand procession.

The little church seemed peaceful after the heat and the stir of the Durham street, peaceful and hushed and crowded to the doors by the relatives and connections of the family. Even the back pews were filled by the poor half-forgotten

remnants of the family who had no wealth to carry them smoothly along the stream of life. Old Mrs. Featherstone (who did washing) was there sobbing because she sobbed at all funerals, and old Miss Haddon, the genteel Pentland cousin, dressed even in the midst of summer in her inevitable cape of thick black broadcloth, and Mrs. Malson, shabby-genteel in her foulards and high-pitched bonnet, and Miss Murgatroyd whose bullfinch house was now "Ye Witch's Broome" where one got bad tea and melancholy sandwiches. . . .

Together Bishop Smallwood and Aunt Cassie had planned a service calculated skilfully to harrow the feelings and give full scope to the vast emotional capacities of their generation and background.

They chose the most emotional of hymns, and Bishop Smallwood, renowned for his effect upon pious and sentimental old ladies, said a few insincere and pompous words which threw Aunt Cassie and poor old Mrs. Featherstone into fresh excesses of grief. The services for the boy became a barbaric rite dedicated not to his brief and pathetic existence but to a glorification of the name he bore and of all those traits—the narrowness, the snobbery, the lower middle-class respect for property—which had culminated in the lingering tragedy of his sickly life. In their respective pews Anson and Aunt Cassie swelled with pride at the mention of the Pentland ancestry. Even the sight of the vigorous, practical, stocky Polish women staring round-eyed at the funeral procession a little before, returned to them now in a wave of pride and secret elation. The same emotion in some way filtered back through the little church from the pulpit where Bishop Smallwood (with the sob in his voice which had won him prizes at the seminary) stood surrounded by midsummer flowers, through all the relatives and connections, until far in the back among the more obscure and remote ones it became simply a pride in their relation to New England and the ancient dying village that

was fast disappearing beneath the inroads of a more vigorous world. Something of the Pentland enchantment engulfed them all, even old Mrs. Featherstone, with her poor back bent from washing to support the four defective grandchildren who ought never to have been born. Through her facile tears (she wept because it was the only pleasure left her) there shone the light of a pride in belonging to these people who had persecuted witches and evolved transcendentalism and Mr. Lowell and Doctor Holmes and the good, kind Mr. Longfellow. It raised her somehow above the level of those hardy foreigners who worshipped the Scarlet Woman of Rome and jostled her on the sidewalks of High Street.

In all the little church there were only two or three, perhaps, who escaped that sudden mystical surge of self-satisfaction. . . . O'Hara, who was forever outside the caste, and Olivia and old John Pentland, sitting there side by side so filled with sorrow that they did not even resent the antics of Bishop Smallwood. Sabine (who had come, after all, to the services) sensed the intensity of the engulfing emotion. It filled her with a sense of slow, cold, impotent rage.

As the little procession left the church, wiping its eyes and murmuring in lugubrious tones, the clouds which a little earlier had sprung up against the distant horizon began to darken the whole sky. The air became so still that the leaves on the tall, drooping elms hung as motionless as leaves in a painted picture, and far away, gently at first, and then with a slow, increasing menace, rose the sound of distant echoing thunder. Ill at ease, the mourners gathered in little groups about the steps, regarding alternately the threatening sky and the waiting hearse, and presently, one by one, the more timorous ones began to drift sheepishly away. Others followed them slowly until by the time the coffin was borne out, they had all melted away save for the members of the "immediate family" and one or two others. Sabine remained. and O'Hara and old

Mrs. Soames (leaning on John Pentland's arm as if it were her grandson who was dead), and old Miss Haddon in her black cape, and the pall-bearers, and of course Bishop Smallwood and the country rector who, in the presence of this august and saintly pillar of the church, had faded to insignificance. Besides these there were one or two other relatives, like Struthers Pentland, a fussy little bald man (cousin of John Pentland and of the disgraceful Horace), who had never married but devoted himself instead to fathering the boys of his classes at Harvard.

It was this little group which entered the motors and hurried off after the hearse in its shameless race with the oncoming storm.

The town burial-ground lay at the top of a high, bald hill where the first settlers of Durham had chosen to dispose of their dead, and the ancient roadway that led up to it was far too steep and stony to permit the passing of motors, so that part way up the hill the party was forced to descend and make the remainder of the journey on foot. As they assembled, silently but in haste, about the open, waiting grave, the sound of the thunder accompanied now by wild flashes of lightning, drew nearer and nearer, and the leaves of the stunted trees and shrubs which a moment before had been so still, began to dance and shake madly in the green light that preceded the storm.

Bishop Smallwood, by nature a timorous man, stood beside the grave opening his jewel-encrusted Prayer Book (he was very High Church and fond of incense and precious stones) and fingering the pages nervously, now looking down at them, now regarding the stolid Polish grave-diggers who stood about waiting to bury the last of the Pentlands. There were irritating small delays, but at last everything was ready and the

Bishop, reading as hastily as he dared, began the service in a voice less rich and theatrical than usual.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. . . ."

And what followed was lost in a violent crash of thunder so that the Bishop was able to omit a line or two without being discovered. The few trees on the bald hill began to sway and rock, bending low toward the earth, and the crape veils of the women performed wild black writhings. In the uproar of wind and thunder only a sentence or two of the service became audible. . . .

"For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, seeing that the past is as a watch in the night. . . ."

And then again a wild, angry Nature took possession of the services, drowning out the anxious voice of the Bishop and the loud theatrical sobs of Aunt Cassie, and again there was a sudden breathless hush and the sound of the Bishop's voice, so pitiful and insignificant in the midst of the storm, reading. . . .

"O teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

And again:

"For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God in His Providence to take out of the world the soul of our deceased brother."

And at last, with relief, the feeble, reedlike voice, repeating with less monotony than usual: *"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. Amen."*

Sabine, in whose hard nature there lay some hidden thing which exulted in storms, barely heard the service. She stood there watching the wild beauty of the sky and the distant sea and the marshes and thinking how different a thing the burial of the first Pentland must have been from the timorous,

hurried rite that marked the passing of the last. She kept seeing those first fanatical, hard-faced, rugged Puritans standing above their tombs like ghosts watching ironically the genteel figure of the Apostle to the Genteel and his jeweled Prayer Book. . . .

The Polish grave-diggers set about their work stolidly indifferent to the storm, and before the first motor had started down the steep and stony path, the rain came with a wild, insane violence, sweeping inward in a wall across the sea and the black marshes. Sabine, at the door of her motor, raised her head and breathed deeply, as if the savage, destructive force of the storm filled her with a kind of ecstasy.

On the following day, cool after the storm and bright and clear, a second procession made its way up the stony path to the top of the bald hill, only this time Bishop Smallwood was not there, nor Cousin Struthers Pentland, for they had both been called away suddenly and mysteriously. And Anson Pentland was not there because he would have nothing to do with a blackguard like Horace Pentland, even in death. In the little group about the open grave stood Olivia and John Pentland and Aunt Cassie, who had come because, after all, the dead man's name was Pentland, and Miss Had-don (in her heavy broadcloth cape), who never missed any funeral and had learned about this one from her friend, the undertaker, who kept her perpetually *au courant*. There were not even any friends to carry the coffin to the grave, and so this labor was divided between the undertaker's men and the grave-diggers. . . .

And the service began again, read this time by the rector,

who since the departure of the Bishop seemed to have grown a foot in stature. . . .

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. . . .

"For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, seeing that is past as a watch in the night. . . .

"O teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Aunt Cassie wept again, though the performance was less good than on the day before, but Olivia and John Pentland stood in silence while Horace Pentland was buried at last in the midst of that little colony of grim and respectable dead.

Sabine was there, too, standing at a little distance, as if she had a contempt for all funerals. She had known Horace Pentland in life and she had gone to see him in his long exile whenever her wanderings led her to the south of France, less from affection than because it irritated the others in the family. (He must have been happier in that warm, rich country than he could ever have been in this cold, stony land.) But she had come to-day less for sentimental reasons than because it gave her the opportunity of a triumph over Aunt Cassie. She could watch Aunt Cassie out of her cold green eyes while they all stood about to bury the family skeleton. Sabine, who had not been to a funeral in the twenty-five years since her father's death, had climbed the stony hill to the Durham town burial-ground twice in as many days. . . .

The rector was speaking again. . . .

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. Amen."

The little group turned away in silence, and in silence disappeared over the rim of the hill down the steep path. The secret burial was finished and Horace Pentland was left alone with the Polish grave-diggers, come home at last.

3

The peace which had taken possession of Olivia as she sat alone by the side of her dead son, returned to her slowly with the passing of the excitement over the funeral. Indeed, she was for once thankful for the listless, futile enchantment which invested the quiet old world. It soothed her at a moment when, all interest having departed from life, she wanted merely to be left in peace. She came to see for a certainty that there was no tragedy in her son's death; the only tragedy had been that he had ever lived at all such a baffled, painful, hopeless existence. And now, after so many years of anxiety, there was peace and a relaxation that seemed strange and in a way delicious . . . moments when, lying in the chaise longue by the window overlooking the marshes, she was enveloped by deep and healing solitude. Even the visits of Aunt Cassie, who would have forced her way into Olivia's room in the interests of "duty," made only a vague, dreamlike impression. The old lady became more and more a droning, busy insect, the sound of whose buzzing grew daily more distant and vague, like the sound of a fly against a window-pane heard through veils of sleep.

From her window she sometimes had a distant view of the old man, riding alone now, in the trap across the fields behind the old white horse, and sometimes she caught a glimpse of his lean figure riding the savage red mare along the lanes. He no longer went alone with the mare; he had yielded to Higgins' insistent warnings of her bad temper and permitted the groom to go with him, always at his side or a little behind to guard him, riding a polo pony with an ease and grace which made horse and man seem a single creature . . . a kind of centaur. On a horse the ugliness

of the robust, animal little man seemed to flow away. It was as if he had been born thus, on a horse, and was awkward and ill at ease with his feet on the earth.

And Olivia knew the thought that was always in the mind of her father-in-law as he rode across the stony, barren fields. He was thinking all the while that all this land, all this fortune, even Aunt Cassie's carefully tended pile, would one day belong to a family of some other name, perhaps a name which he had never even heard.

There were no more Pentlands. Sybil and her husband would be rich, enormously so, with the Pentland money and Olivia's money . . . but there would never be any more Pentlands. It had all come to an end in this . . . futility and oblivion. In another hundred years the name would exist, if it existed at all, only as a memory, embalmed within the pages of Anson's book.

The new melancholy which settled over the house came in the end even to touch the spirit of Sybil, so young and so eager for experience, like a noxious mildew. Olivia noticed it first in a certain shadowy listlessness that seemed to touch every action of the girl, and then in an occasional faint sigh of weariness, and in the visits the girl paid her in her room, and in the way she gave up willingly evenings at Brook Cottage to stay at home with her mother. She saw that Sybil, who had always been so eager, was touched by the sense of futility which she (Olivia) had battled for so long. And Sybil, Sybil of them all, alone possessed the chance of being saved.

She thought, "I must not come to lean on her. I must not be the sort of mother who spoils the life of her child."

And when John Pentland came to sit listlessly by her side, sometimes in silence, sometimes making empty speeches that meant nothing in an effort to cover his despair, she saw that he, too, had come to her for the strength which she alone

could give him. Even old Mrs. Soames had failed him, for she lay ill again and able to see him only for a few minutes each day. (It was Sabine's opinion, uttered during one of her morning visits, that these strange sudden illnesses came from overdoses of drugs.)

So she came to see that she was being a coward to abandon the struggle now, and she rose one morning almost at dawn to put on her riding-clothes and set out with Sybil across the wet meadows to meet O'Hara. She returned with something of her pallor gone and a manner almost of gaiety, her spirit heightened by the air, the contact with O'Hara and the sense of having taken up the struggle once more.

Sabine, always watchful, noticed the difference and put it down to the presence of O'Hara alone, and in this she was not far wrong, for set down there in Durham, he affected Olivia powerfully as one who had no past but only a future. With him she could talk of things which lay ahead—of his plans for the farm he had bought, of Sybil's future, of his own reckless, irresistible career.

O'Hara himself had come to a dangerous state of mind. He was one of those men who seek fame and success less for the actual rewards than for the satisfaction of the struggle, the fierce pleasure of winning with all the chances against one. He had won successes already. He had his house, his horses, his motor, his well-tailored clothes, and he knew the value of these things, not only in the world of Durham, but in the slums and along the wharves of Boston. He had no illusions about the imperfect workings of democracy. He knew (perhaps because, having begun at the very bottom, he had fought his way very near to the top) that the poor man expects a politician to be something of a splendid affair, especially when he has begun his career as a very

common and ordinary sort of poor man. O'Hara was not playing his game foolishly or recklessly. When he visited the slums or sat in at political meetings, he was a sort of universal common man, a brother to all. When he addressed a large meeting or presided at an assembly, he arrived in a glittering motor and appeared in the elegant clothes suitable to a representative of the government, of power; and so he reflected credit on those men who had played with him as boys along India Wharf and satisfied the universal hunger in man for something more splendid than the machinery of a perfect democracy.

He understood the game perfectly and made no mistakes, for he had had the best of all training—that of knowing all sorts of people in all sorts of conditions. In himself, he embodied them all, if the simple and wholly kindly and honest were omitted; for he was really not a simple man nor a wholly honest one and he was too ruthless to be kindly. He understood people (as Sabine had guessed), with their little prides and vanities and failings and ambitions.

Aunt Cassie and Anson in the rigidity of their minds had been unjust in thinking that their world was the goal of his ambitions. They had, in the way of those who depend on their environment as a justification for their own existence, placed upon it a value out of all proportion in the case of a man like O'Hara. To them it was everything, the ultimate to be sought on this earth, and so they supposed it must seem to O'Hara. It would have been impossible for them to believe that he considered it only as a small part of his large scheme of life and laid siege to it principally for the pleasure that he found in the battle; for it was true that O'Hara, once he had won, would not know what to do with the fruits of his victory.

Already he himself had begun to see this. He had begun to understand that the victory was so easy that the battle

held little savor for him. Moments of satisfaction such as that which had overtaken him as he sat talking to Sabine were growing more and more rare . . . moments when he would stop and think, "Here am I, Michael O'Hara, a nobody . . . son of a laborer and a housemaid, settled in the midst of such a world as Durham, talking to such a woman as Mrs. Cane Callendar."

No, the savor was beginning to fail, to go out of the struggle. He was beginning to be bored, and as he grew bored he grew also restless and unhappy.

Born in the Roman Catholic church, he was really neither a very religious nor a very superstitious man. He was skeptic enough not to believe all the faiths the church sought to impose upon him, yet he was not skeptic enough to find peace of mind in an artificial will to believe. For so long a time he had relied wholly upon himself that the idea of leaning for support, even in lonely, restless moments, upon a God or a church, never even occurred to him. He remained outwardly a Roman Catholic because by denying the faith he would have incurred the enmity of the church and many thousands of devout Irish and Italians. The problem simply did not concern him deeply one way or the other.

And so he had come, guided for the moment by no very strong passion, into the doldrums of confusion and boredom. Even his fellow-politicians in Boston saw the change in him and complained that he displayed no very great interest in the campaign to send him to Congress. He behaved at times as if it made not the slightest difference to him whether he was elected to Congress or not . . . he, this Michael O'Hara who was so valuable to his party, so engaging and shrewd, who could win for it almost anything he chose.

And though he took care that no one should divine it, this strange state of mind troubled him more deeply than any of his friends. He was assailed by the certainty that there

was something lacking from his life, something very close to the foundations. Now that he was inactive and bored, he had begun to think of himself for the first time. The fine, glorious burst of first youth, when everything seemed part of a splendid game, was over and done now, and he felt himself slipping away toward the borderland of middle-age. Because he was a man of energy and passion, who loved life, he felt the change with a keen sense of sadness. There was a kind of horror for him in the idea of a lowered tempo of life—a fear that filled him at times with a passionately satisfactory sort of Gaelic melancholy.

In such moments, he had quite honestly taken stock of all he possessed, and found the amassed result bitterly unsatisfactory. He had a good enough record. He was decidedly more honorable than most men in such a dirty business as politics—indeed, far more honorable and freer from spites and nastinesses than many of those who had come out of this very sacred Durham world. He had made enough money in the course of his career, and he was winning his battle in Durham. Yet at thirty-five life had begun to slacken, to lose some of that zest which once had led him to rise every morning bursting with animal spirits, his brain all a-glitter with fascinating schemes.

And then, in the very midst of this perilous state of mind, he discovered one morning that the old sensation of delight at rising had returned to him, only it was not because his brain was filled with fascinating schemes. He arose with an interest in life because he knew that in a little while he would see Olivia Pentland. He arose, eager to fling himself on his horse and, riding across the meadows, to wait by the abandoned gravel-pit until he saw her coming over the dew-covered fields, radiant, it seemed to him, as the morning itself. On the days when she did not come it was as if the bottom had dropped out of his whole existence.

It was not that he was a man encountering the idea of woman for the first time. There had been women in his life always, since the very first bedraggled Italian girl he had met as a boy among the piles of lumber along the wharves. There had been women always because it was impossible for a man so vigorous and full of zest, so ruthless and so scornful, to have lived thirty-five years without them, and because he was an attractive man, filled when he chose to be, with guile and charm, whom women found it difficult to resist. There had been plenty of women, kept always in the background, treated as a necessity and prevented skilfully from interfering with the more important business of making a career.

But with Olivia Pentland, something new and disturbing had happened to him . . . something which, in his eagerness to encompass all life and experience, possessed an overwhelming sensuous fascination. She was not simply another woman in a procession of considerable length. Olivia Pentland, he found, was different from any of the others . . . a woman of maturity, poised, beautiful, charming and intelligent, and besides all these things she possessed for him a kind of fresh and iridescent bloom, the same freshness, only a little saddened, that touched her young daughter.

In the beginning, when they had talked together while she planned the garden at Brook Cottage, he had found himself watching her, lost in a kind of wonder, so that he scarcely understood what she was saying. And all the while he kept thinking, "Here is a wonderful woman . . . the most wonderful I've ever seen or will ever see again . . . a woman who could make life a different affair for me, who would make of love something which people say it is."

She had affected him thus in a way that swept aside all the vulgar and cynical coarseness with which a man of such experience is likely to invest the whole idea of woman. Un-

til now women had seemed to him made to entertain men or to provide children for them, and now he saw that there was, after all, something in this sentiment with which people surrounded a love affair. For a long time he searched for a word to describe Olivia and in the end he fell back upon the old well-worn one which she always brought to mind. She was a "lady"—and as such she had an overwhelming effect upon his imagination.

He had said to himself that here was a woman who could understand him, not in the aloof, analytical fashion of a clever woman like Sabine Callendar, but in quite another way. She was a woman to whom he could say, "I am thus and so. My life has been of this kind. My motives are of this sort," and she would understand, the bad with the good. She would be the one person in the world to whom he could pour out the whole burden of secrets, the one woman who could ever destroy the weary sense of loneliness which sometimes afflicted him. She made him feel that, for all his shrewdness and hard-headed scheming, she was far wiser than he would ever be, that in a way he was a small boy who might come to her and, burying his head in her lap, have her stroke his thick black hair. She would understand that there were times when a man wanted to be treated thus. In her quiet way she was a strong woman, unselfish, too, who did not feed upon flattery and perpetual attention, the sort of woman who is precious to a man bent upon a career. The thought of her filled him with a poignant feeling of sadness, but in his less romantic moments he saw, too, that she held the power of catching him up out of his growing boredom. She would be of great value to him.

And so Sabine had not been far wrong when she thought of him as the small boy sitting on the curbstone who had looked up at her gravely and said, "I'm playing." He was at times very like such an image.

But in the end he was always brought up abruptly against the hard reality of the fact that she was already married to a man who did not want her himself but who would never set her free, a man who perhaps would have sacrificed everything in the world to save a scandal in his family. And beyond these hard, tangible difficulties he discerned, too, the whole dark decaying web, less obvious but none the less potent, in which she had become enmeshed.

Yet these obstacles only created a fascination to a mind so complex, so perverse, for in the solitude of his mind and in the bitterness of the long struggle he had known, he came to hold the whole world in contempt and saw no reason why he should not take what he wanted from this Durham world. Obstacles such as these provided the material for a new battle, a new source of interest in the turbulent stream of his existence; only this time there was a difference . . . that he coveted the prize itself more than the struggle. He wanted Olivia Pentland, strangely enough, not for a moment or even for a month or a year, but for always.

He waited because he understood, in the shrewdness of his long experience, that to be insistent would only startle such a woman and cause him to lose her entirely, and because he knew of no plan of action which could overcome the obstacles which kept them apart. He waited, as he had done many times in his career, for circumstances to solve themselves. And while he waited, with each time that he saw her she grew more and more desirable, and his own invincible sense of caution became weaker and weaker.

4

In those long days spent in her room, Olivia had come slowly to be aware of the presence of the newcomer at Brook Cottage. It had begun on the night of Jack's death with

the sound of his music drifting across the marshes, and after the funeral Sabine had talked of him to Olivia with an enthusiasm curiously foreign to her. Once or twice she had caught a glimpse of him crossing the meadows toward O'Hara's shining chimneys or going down the road that led through the marshes to the sea—a tall, red-haired young man who walked with a slight limp. Sybil, she found, was strangely silent about him, but when she questioned the girl about her plans for the day she found, more often than not, that they had to do with him. When she spoke of him, Sybil had a way of blushing and saying, "He's very nice, Mother. I'll bring him over when you want to see people. . . . I used to know him in Paris."

And Olivia, wisely, did not press her questions. Besides, Sabine had told her almost all there was to know . . . perhaps more than Sybil herself knew.

Sabine said, "He belongs to a rather remarkable family . . . wilful, reckless and full of spirit. His mother is probably the most remarkable of them all. She's a charming woman who has lived luxuriously in Paris most of her life . . . not one of the American colony. She doesn't ape any one and she's incapable of pretense of any sort. She's lived, rather alone, over there on money . . . quite a lot of money . . . which seems to come out of steel-mills in some dirty town of the Middle West. She's one of my great friends . . . a woman of no intellect, but very beautiful and blessed with a devastating charm. She is one of the women who was born for men. . . . She's irresistible to them, and I imagine there have been men in her life always. She was made for men, but her taste is perfect, so her morals don't matter."

The woman . . . indeed all Jean de Cyon's family . . . seemed to fascinate Sabine as she sat having tea with Olivia, for she went on and on, talking far more than usual, de-

scribing the house of Jean's mother, her friends, the people whom one met at her dinners, all there was to tell about her.

"She's the sort of woman who has existed since the beginning of time. There's some mystery about her early life. It has something to do with Jean's father. I don't think she was happy with him. He's never mentioned. Of course, she's married again now to a Frenchman . . . much older than herself . . . a man, very distinguished, who has been in three cabinets. That's where the boy gets his French name. The old man has adopted him and treats him like his own son. De Cyon is a good name in France, one of the best; but of course Jean hasn't any French blood. He's pure American, but he's never seen his own country until now."

Sabine finished her tea and putting her cup back on the Regence table (which had come from Olivia's mother and so found its graceful way into a house filled with stiff early American things), she added, "It's a remarkable family . . . wild and restless. Jean had an aunt who died in the Carmelite convent at Lisieux, and his cousin is Lilli Barr . . . a really great musician." She looked out of the window and after a moment said in a low voice, "Lilli Barr is the woman whom my husband married . . . but she divorced him, too, and now we are friends . . . she and I." The familiar hard, metallic laugh returned and she added, "I imagine our experience with him made us sympathetic. . . . You see, I know the family very well. It's the sort of blood which produces people with a genius for life . . . for living in the moment."

She did not say that Jean and his mother and the ruthless cousin Lilli Barr fascinated her because they stood in a way for the freedom toward which she had been struggling through all the years since she escaped from Durham. They were free in a way from countries, from towns, from laws, from prejudices, even in a way from nationality. She had

hoped once that Jean might interest himself in her own sullen, independent, clever Thérèse, but in her knowledge of the world she had long ago abandoned that hope, knowing that a boy so violent and romantic, so influenced by an upbringing among Frenchmen, a youth so completely masculine, was certain to seek a girl more soft and gentle and feminine than Thérèse. She knew it was inevitable that he should fall in love with a girl like Sybil, and in a way she was content because it fell in admirably with her own indolent plans. The Pentlands were certain to look upon Jean de Cyon as a sort of gipsy, and when they knew the whole truth. . . .

The speculation fascinated her. The summer in Durham, even with the shadow of Jack's death flung across it, was not proving as dreadful as she had feared; and this new development interested her as something she had never before observed . . . an idyllic love affair between two young people who each seemed to her a perfect, charming creature.

5

It had all begun on the day nearly a year earlier when all Paris was celebrating the anniversary of the Armistice, and in the morning Sybil had gone with Thérèse and Sabine to lay a wreath beside the flame at the Arc de Triomphe (for the war was one of the unaccountable things about which Sabine chose to make a display of sentiment). And afterward she played in the garden with the dogs which they would not let her keep at the school in Saint-Cloud, and then she had gone into the house to find there a fascinating and beautiful woman of perhaps fifty—a Madame de Cyon, who had come to lunch, with her son, a young man of twenty-four, tall, straight and slender, with red hair and dark blue eyes and a deep, pleasant voice. On account of the day he was dressed in his cuirassier's uniform of black and silver, and

because of an old wound he walked with a slight limp. Almost at once (she remembered this when she thought of him) he had looked at her in a frank, admiring way which gave her a sense of pleasurable excitement wholly new in her experience.

Something in the sight of the uniform, or perhaps in the feel of the air, the sound of the military music, the echoes of the *Marseillaise* and the *Sambre et Meuse*, the sight of the soldiers in the street and the great Arc with the flame burning there . . . something in the feel of Paris, something which she loved passionately, had taken possession of her. It was something which, gathering in that moment, had settled upon the strange young man who regarded her with such admiring eyes.

She knew vaguely that she must have fallen in love in the moment she stood there in Sabine Callendar's salon bowing to Lily de Cyon. The experience had grown in intensity when, after lunch, she took him into the garden to show him her dogs and watched him rubbing the ears of the Doberman "Imp" and talking to the dog softly in a way which made her know that he felt about animals as she did. He had been so pleasant in his manner, so gentle in his bigness, so easy to talk to, as if they had always been friends.

And then almost at once he had gone away to the Argentine, without even seeing her again, on a trip to learn the business of cattle-raising because he had the idea that one day he might settle himself as a rancher. But he left behind him a vivid image which with the passing of time grew more and more intense in the depths of a romantic nature which revolted at the idea of Thérèse choosing a father scientifically for her child. It was an image by which she had come, almost unconsciously, to measure other men, even to such small details as the set of their shoulders and the way they used their hands and the timbre of their voices. It was this she

had really meant when she said to her mother, "I know what sort of man I want to marry. I know exactly." She had meant, quite without knowing it, that it must be a man like Jean de Cyon . . . charming, romantic and a little wild.

She had not forgotten him, though there were moments at the school in Saint-Cloud when she had believed she would never see him again—moments when she was swept by a delicious sense of hopeless melancholy in which she believed that her whole life had been blighted, and which led her to make long and romantic entries in the diary that was kept hidden beneath her mattress. And so as she grew more hopeless, the aura of romance surrounding him took on colors deeper and more varied and intense. She had grown so pale that Mademoiselle Vernueil took to dosing her, and Thérèse accused her abruptly of having fallen in love, a thing she denied vaguely and with overtones of romantic mystery.

And then with the return to Pentlands (a return advised by her mother on account of Jack's health) the image dimmed a little in the belief that even by the wildest flights of imagination there was no chance of her seeing him again. It became a hopeless passion; she prepared herself to forget him and, in the wisdom of her young mind, grow accustomed to the idea of marrying one of the tame young men who were so much more suitable and whom her family had always known. She had watched her admirers carefully, weighing them always against the image of the young man with red hair, dressed in the black and silver of the cuirassiers, and beside that image they had seemed to her—even the blond, good-looking Mannering boy—like little boys, rather naughty and not half so old and wise as herself. She had reconciled herself secretly and with gravity to the idea of making one of the matches common in her world—a marriage determined by property and the fact that her fiancé would be "the right sort of person."

And so the whole affair had come to take on the color of a tragic romance, to be guarded secretly. Perhaps when she was an old woman she would tell the story to her grandchildren. She believed that whomever she married, she would be thinking always of Jean de Cyon. It was one of those half-comic illusions of youth in which there is more than a grain of melancholy truth.

And then abruptly had come the news of his visit to Brook Cottage. She still kept her secret, but not well enough to prevent her mother and Sabine from suspecting it. She had betrayed herself first on the very night of Jack's death when she had said, with a sudden light in her eye, "It's Jean de Cyon. . . . I'd forgotten he was arriving to-night." Olivia had noticed the light because it was something which went on and on.

And at Brook Cottage young de Cyon, upset by the delay caused by the funeral and the necessity of respecting the mourning at Pentlands, had sulked and behaved in such a way that he would have been a nuisance to any one save Sabine, who found amusement in the spectacle. Used to rushing headlong toward anything he desired (as he had rushed into the French army at seventeen and off to the Argentine nine months ago), he turned ill-tempered and spent his days out of doors, rowing on the river and bathing in the solitude of the great white beach. He quarreled with Thérèse, whom he had known since she was a little girl, and tried to be as civil as possible toward the amused Sabine.

She knew by now that he had not come to Durham through any great interest in herself or Thérèse. She knew now how wise she had been (for the purposes of her plan) to have included in her invitation to him the line . . . "Sybil

Pentland lives on the next farm to us. You may remember her. She lunched with us last Armistice Day."

She saw that he rather fancied himself as a man of the world who was being very clever in keeping his secret. He asked her about Sybil Pentland in a casual way that was transparently artificial, and consulted her on the lapse of time decently necessary before he broke in upon the mourning at Pentlands, and had Miss Pentland shown any admiration for the young men about Durham? If he had not been so charming and impatient he would have bored Sabine to death.

The young man was afraid of only one thing . . . that perhaps she had changed in some way, that perhaps she was not in the reality as charming as she had seemed to him in the long months of his absence. He was not without experience (indeed, Sabine believed that he had gone to the Argentine to escape from some Parisian complication) and he knew that such calamitous disappointments *could* happen. Perhaps when he came to know her better the glamour would fade. Perhaps she did not remember him at all. But she seemed to him, after months of romantic brooding, the most desirable woman he had ever seen.

It was a new world in which he discovered himself, in some way a newer and more different world than the vast grass-covered plains from which he had just come. People about Durham, he learned, had a way of saying that Boston and Durham were like England, but this he put down quietly as a kind of snobbery, because Boston and Durham weren't like England at all, so far as he could see; in spots Boston and Durham seemed old, but there wasn't the same richness, the same glamour about them. They should have been romantic and yet they were not; they were more, it seemed to him, like the illustrations in a school history. They were

dry . . . *sec*, he thought, considering the French word better in this case on account of its sound.

And it wasn't the likeness to England that he found interesting, but rather the difference . . . the bleak rawness of the countryside and the sight of whole colonies of peoples as strange and foreign as the Czechs and Poles providing a sort of alien background to the whole picture.

He had gone about the business of becoming acquainted with his own country in a thorough, energetic fashion, and being a sensuous youth, filled with a taste for colors and sounds and all the emanations of the spectacle of life, he was acutely conscious of it.

To Sabine, he said, "You know the funny thing is that it seems to me like coming home. It makes me feel that I belong in America . . . not in Durham, but in New York or some of those big roaring towns I've passed through."

He spoke, naturally enough, not at all like an American but in the clipped English fashion, rather swallowing his words, and now and then with a faint trace of French intonation. His voice was deeper and richer than the New England voices, with their way of calling Charles Street "Challs Street" and sacred Harvard . . . "Havaad."

It was the spectacle of New York which had fascinated him more than any other because it surpassed all his dreams of it and all the descriptions people had given him of its immense force and barbaric splendor and the incredible variety of tongues and people. New York, Sabine told him with a consciousness of uttering treason, *was* America, far more than the sort of life he would encounter in Durham.

As he talked to Sabine of New York, he would rise to that pitch of excitement and enthusiasm which comes to people keenly alive. He even confided in her that he had left Europe never to return there to live.

"It's old country," he said, "and if one has been brought

up there, as I've been, there's no reason for going back there to live. In a way it's a dead world . . . dead surely in comparison to the Americas. And it's the future that interests me . . . not the past. I want to be where the most is going on . . . in the center of things."

When he was not playing the piano wildly, or talking to Sabine, or fussing about with Thérèse among the frogs and insects of the laboratory she had rigged up on the glass-enclosed piazza, he was walking about the garden in a state of suppressed excitement, turning over and over in his young mind his own problem and the plans he had for adjusting himself in this vigorous country. To discover it now, at the age of twenty-five, was an exciting experience. He was beginning to understand those young Americans he had encountered occasionally in Europe (like his cousin Fergus Tolliver, who died in the war), who seemed so alive, so filled with a reckless sense of adventure . . . young men irresistible in such an old, tired world, because Nature itself was on their side.

To ease his impatience he sought refuge in a furious physical activity; rowing, swimming and driving with Sabine about the Durham countryside. He could not walk far, on account of the trouble caused by his old wound, but he got as far as O'Hara's house, where he met the Irishman and they became friends. O'Hara turned over to him a canoe and a rowing-scutt and told him that whenever his leg was better he might have a horse from his stables.

One morning as he pulled his canoe up the muddy bank of the river after his early exercise, he heard the sound of hoofs in the thick mud near at hand and, turning, he saw Sybil Pentland on her mare Andromache coming out of the thicket almost at his side.

It was a superb morning—cool for Durham in mid-

August—and on the lazy river the nymphaeas spread their waxy white blossoms in starlike clusters against a carpet of green pads. It was a morning made for delights, with the long rays of the rising sun striking to silver the dew-hung spider-webs that bound together the tangled masses of wild-grape vines; and young de Cyon, standing on the edge of the path, flushed with health and the early morning exercise, his thick red hair all rumpled, was overcome swiftly by a sense of tremendous physical well-being and strength. A whole world lay before him waiting to be conquered; and into it, out of the tangled thicket, had come Sybil Pentland, more charming in the flesh than she had seemed to him even on the long starlit nights when he lay awake on the pampas thinking of her.

For a second neither of them said anything. The girl, startled and blushing a little, but touched, too, by a quiet sense of dignity, drew in her mare; and Jean, looking up at her, said in a falsely casual way (for his veins were throbbing with excitement), "Oh! Hello! You're Miss Pentland."

"Yes." But she looked suddenly disappointed, as if she *really* believed that he had almost forgotten her.

Standing clad only in trousers and a rowing-shirt, he looked down at his costume and said, grinning, "I'm not dressed to receive visitors."

Somehow this served to break the sense of restraint, and they fell into conversation, exchanging a few banal remarks on the beauty of the morning, and Jean, standing by Andromache, rubbing her nose with the same tenderness he had shown toward Sybil's dogs, looked at her out of the candid blue eyes and said, "I should have come to see you sooner, only I thought you mightn't want to see me."

A quivering note of warmth colored his voice.

"It would have made no difference," she said. "And now

you must come often . . . as often as you like. How long are you staying at Brook Cottage?"

For a second he hesitated. "A fortnight . . . perhaps. Perhaps . . . longer."

And looking down at him, she thought, "I must make him stay. If I lose him again now. . . . I must make him stay. I like him more than any one in the world. I can't lose him now."

And she began to reason with herself that Fate was on her side, that destiny had delivered him again into her hands. It was like a thing ordained, and life with him would be exciting, a thrilling affair. The quiet stubbornness, come down to her from Olivia, began to rise and take possession of her. She was determined not to lose him.

They moved away up the river, still talking in a rather stiff fashion, while Jean walked beside Andromache, limping a little. One banality followed another as they groped toward each other, each proud and fearful of showing his feelings, each timid and yet eager and impatient. It was the excitement of being near to each other that made the conversation itself take on a sense of importance. Neither of them really knew what they were saying. In one sense they seemed strange and exciting to each other, but in another they were not strange at all because there lay between them that old feeling, which Sybil had recognized in the garden of the Rue de Tilsitt, that they had known each other always. There were no hesitations or doubts or suspicions.

The sky was brilliant; the scent of the mucky river and growing weeds was overwhelming. There came to both of them a quickening of the senses, a sort of heightened ecstasy, which shut out all the world. It was a kind of enchantment, but different from the enchantment which enveloped the dead house at Pentlands.

6

Each time that Olivia rose at dawn to ride out with Sybil and meet O'Hara at the old gravel-pit, the simple excursion became more glamorous to her. There was a youth in the contact with Sybil and the Irishman which she had almost forgotten, a feeling of strength for which she had long been hungering. It was, she found, a splendid way to begin the day—in the cool of the morning, riding away over the drenched grass; it made a freshening contrast to the rest of a day occupied largely by such old people as her father-in-law and Anson (who was really an old man) and the old woman in the north wing and by the persistent fluttering attacks of Aunt Cassie. And Olivia, who was not without a secret vanity, began to notice herself in the mirror . . . that her eyes were brighter and her skin was more clear. She saw that she was even perhaps beautiful, and that the riding-habit became her in a romantic fashion.

She knew, too, riding across the fields between Sybil and O'Hara, that he sometimes watched her with a curious bright light in his blue eyes. He said nothing; he betrayed in no way the feeling behind all that sudden, quiet declaration on the terrace of Brook Cottage. She began to see that he was (as Sabine had discovered almost at once) a very clever and dangerous man. It was not alone because of the strange, almost physical, effect he had upon people—an effect which was almost as if his presence took possession of you completely—but because he had patience and knew how to be silent. If he had rushed in, recklessly and clumsily, everything would have been precipitated and ruined at once. There would have been a scene ending with his dismissal and Olivia, perhaps, would have been free; but he had never touched her. It was simply that he was always there, assuring her in

some mysterious way that his emotions had not changed, that he still wanted her more than anything in all the world. And to a woman who was romantic by nature and had never known any romance, it was a dangerous method.

There came a morning when, waiting by the gravel-pit, O'Hara saw that there was only one rider coming toward him across the fields from Pentlands. At first it occurred to him that it must be Sybil coming alone, without her mother, and the old boredom and despair engulfed him swiftly. It was only when the rider came nearer and he saw the white star in the forehead of her horse that he knew it was Olivia herself. That she came alone, knowing what he had already told her, he took as a sign of immense importance.

This time he did not wait or ride slowly toward her. He galloped impatiently as a boy across the wet fields to meet her.

She had the old look of radiance about her and a shyness, too, that made her seem at first a trifle cool and withdrawn. She told him quietly, "Sybil didn't come this morning. She went out very early to fish with Jean de Cyon. The mackerel are beginning to run in the open water off the marshes."

There was an odd, strained silence and O'Hara said, "He's a nice boy . . . de Cyon." And then, with a heroic effort to overcome the shyness which she always managed to impose upon him, he said in a low voice, "But I'm glad she didn't come. I've wanted it to be like this all along."

She did not say archly that he must not talk in this vein. It was a part of her fascination that she was too honest and intelligent not to dispense with such coquetry. He had had enough of coquetry from cheap women and had wearied of it long ago. Besides, she had wanted it "like this" herself and she knew that with O'Hara it was silly to pretend, because sooner or later he always found her out. They were not

children, either of them. They both knew what they were doing, that it was a dangerous, even a reckless thing; and yet the very sense of excitement made the adventure as irresistible to the one as to the other.

For a little time they rode in silence, watching the dark hoofs of the horses as they sent up little showers of glittering dew from the knee-deep grass and clover, and presently as they turned out of the fields into the path that led into the birch woods, he laughed and said, "A penny for your thoughts."

Smiling, she replied, "I wouldn't sell them for millions."

"They must be very precious."

"Perhaps . . . precious to me, and to no one else."

"Not to any one at all. . . ."

"No. . . . I don't think they'd interest any one. They're not too cheerful."

At this he fell silent again, with an air of brooding and disappointment. For a time she watched him, and presently she said, "You mustn't sulk on a morning like this."

"I'm not sulking. . . . I was only . . . thinking."

She laughed. "A penny for your thoughts."

He did not laugh. He spoke with a sudden intensity. "They, too, are worth a million . . . more than that . . . only I'll share them with you. I wouldn't share them with any one else."

At the sound of his voice, a silly wave of happiness swept through Olivia. She thought, "I'm being young and ridiculous and enjoying myself."

Aloud she said, "I haven't a penny, but if you'll trust me until to-morrow?"

And then he turned to her abruptly, the shyness gone and in its place an emotion close to irritation and anger. "Why buy them?" he asked. "You know well enough what they

are. You haven't forgotten what I told you on the terrace at Brook Cottage. . . . It's grown more true every day . . . all of it." When he saw that she had become suddenly grave, he said, "And what about you?"

"You know how impossible it is."

"Nothing is impossible . . . nothing. Besides, I don't mean the difficulties. Those will come later. . . . I only mean your own feelings."

"Can't you see that I like you? . . . I must like you else I wouldn't have come alone this morning."

"Like me," he echoed with bitterness. "I'm not interested in having you like me!" And when she made no reply, he added, almost savagely, "Why do you keep me away from you? Why do you always put a little wall about yourself?"

"Do I?" she asked, stupidly, and with a sense of pain.

"You are cool and remote even when you laugh."

"I don't want to be—I hate cold people."

For a moment she caught a quick flash of the sudden bad temper which sometimes betrayed him. "It's because you're so damned ladylike. Sometimes I wish you were a servant or a scrub-woman."

"And then I wouldn't be the same—would I?"

He looked up quickly, as if to make a sudden retort, and then, checking himself, rode on in silence. Stealing a glance at him, Olivia caught against the wall of green a swift image of the dark, stubborn tanned head—almost, she thought, like the head of a handsome bull—bent a little, thoughtfully, almost sadly; and again a faint, weak feeling attacked her—the same sensation that had overcome her on the night of her son's death when she sat regarding the back of Anson's head and not seeing it at all. She thought, "Why is it that this man—a stranger—seems nearer to me than Anson has ever been? Why is it that I talk to him in a way I never talked to Anson?" And a curious feeling of pity seized

her at the sight of the dark head. In a quick flash of understanding she saw him as a little boy searching awkwardly for something which he did not understand; she wanted to stroke the thick, dark hair in a comforting fashion.

He was talking again. "You know nothing about me." he was saying. "And sometimes I think you ought to know it all." Looking at her quickly he asked, "Could you bear to hear it . . . a little of it?"

She smiled at him, certain that in some mysterious, clairvoyant fashion she had penetrated the very heart of his mood, and she thought, "How sentimental I'm being . . . how sickeningly sentimental!" Yet it was a rich, luxuriant mood in which her whole being relaxed and bathed itself. She thought again, "Why should I not enjoy this? I've been cautious all my life."

And seeing her smile, he began to talk, telling her, as they rode toward the rising sun, the story of his humble origin and of those early bitter days along India Wharf, and from time to time she said, "I understand. My own childhood wasn't happy," or, "Go on, please. It fascinates me . . . more than you can imagine."

So he went on, telling her the story of the long scar on his temple, telling her as he had known he would, of his climb to success, confessing everything, even the things of which he had come to be a little ashamed, and betraying from time to time the bitterness which afflicts those who have made their own way against great odds. The shrewd, complex man became as naïve as a little boy; and she understood, as he had known she would. It was miraculous how right he had been about her.

Lost in this mood, they rode on and on as the day rose and grew warm, enveloped all the while in the odor of the dark, rich, growing thicket and the acrid smell of the tall marsh-ferns, until Olivia, glancing at her watch, said, "It is very

late. I shall have missed the family breakfast." She meant really that Anson would have gone up to Boston by now and that she was glad—only it was impossible to say a thing like that.

At the gravel-pit, she bade him good-by, and turning her mare toward Pentlands she felt the curious effect of his nearness slipping away from her with each new step; it was as if the hot August morning were turning cold. And when she came in sight of the big red brick house sitting so solidly among the ancient elms, she thought, "I must never do this again. I have been foolish." And again, "Why should I not do it? Why should I not be happy? They have no right to any claim upon me."

But there was one claim, she knew; there was Sybil. She must not make a fool of herself for the sake of Sybil. She must do nothing to interfere with what had been taking place this very morning in the small fishing-boat far out beyond the marshes somewhere near the spot where Savina Pentland had been drowned. She knew well enough why Sybil had chosen to go fishing instead of riding; it was so easy to look at the girl and at young de Cyon and know what was happening there. She herself had no right to stand in the way of this other thing which was so much younger and fresher, so much more nearly perfect.

As she put her mare over the low wall by the stables she looked up and chanced to see a familiar figure in rusty black standing in the garden, as if she had been there all the while looking out over the meadows, watching them. As she drew near, Aunt Cassie came forward with an expression of anxiety on her face, saying in a thin, hushed voice, as if she might be overheard, "I thought you'd never come back, Olivia dear. I've been looking everywhere for you."

Aware from the intense air of mystery that some new calamity had occurred, Olivia replied, "I was riding with O'Hara. We went too far and it was too hot to hurry the horses."

"I know," said Aunt Cassie. "I saw you." ("Of course she would," thought Olivia. "Does anything ever escape her?") "It's about *her*. She's been violent again this morning and Miss Egan says you may be able to do something. She keeps raving about something to do with the attic and Sabine."

"Yes, I know what it is. I'll go right up."

Higgins appeared, grinning and with a bright birdlike look in his sharp eyes, as if he knew all that had been happening and wanted to say, "Ah, you were out with O'Hara this morning . . . alone. . . . Well, you can't do better, Ma'am. I hope it brings you happiness. You ought to have a man like that."

As he took the bridle, he said, "That's a fine animal Mr. O'Hara rides, Ma'am. I wish we had him in our stables. . . ."

She murmured something in reply and without even waiting for coffee hastened up the dark stairs to the north wing. On the way past the row of tall deep-set windows she caught a swift glimpse of Sabine, superbly dressed and holding a bright yellow parasol over her head, moving indolently up the long drive toward the house, and again she had a sudden unaccountable sense of something melancholy, perhaps even tragic, a little way off. It was one of those quick, inexplicable waves of depression that sweeps over one like a shadow. She said to herself, "I'm depressed now because an hour ago I was too happy."

And immediately she thought, "But it was like Aunt Cassie to have such a thought as that. I must take care or I'll be

getting to be a true Pentland . . . believing that if I'm happy a calamity is soon to follow."

She had moments of late when it seemed to her that something in the air, some power hidden in the old house itself, was changing her slowly, imperceptibly, in spite of herself.

Miss Egan met her outside the door, with the fixed eternal smile which to-day seemed to Olivia the sort of smile that the countenance of Fate itself might wear.

"The old lady is more quiet," she said. "Higgins helped me and we managed to bind her in the bed so that she couldn't harm herself. It's surprising how much strength she has in her poor thin body." She explained that old Mrs. Pentland kept screaming, "Sabine! Sabine!" for Mrs. Callendar and that she kept insisting on being allowed to go into the attic.

"It's the old idea that she's lost something up there," said Miss Egan. "But it's probably only something she's imagined." Olivia was silent for a moment. "I'll go and search," she said. "It might be there is something and if I could find it, it would put an end to these spells."

She found them easily, almost at once, now that there was daylight streaming in at the windows of the cavernous attic. They lay stuffed away beneath one of the great beams . . . a small bundle of ancient yellowed letters which had been once tied together with a bit of mauve ribbon since torn in haste by some one who thrust them in this place of concealment. They had been opened carelessly and in haste, for the moldering paper was all cracked and torn along the edges. The ink, violet once, had turned to a dirty shade of brown.

Standing among the scattered toys left by Jack and Sybil

the last time they had played house, Olivia held the letters one by one up to the light. There were eleven in all and each one was addressed to Mrs. J. Pentland, at Pentlands. Eight of them had been sent through the Boston post-office and the other three bore no stamps of any kind, as if they had been sent by messengers or in a bouquet or between the leaves of a book. The handwriting was that of a man, large, impetuous, sprawling, which showed a tendency to blur the letters together in a headlong, impatient way.

She thought at once, "They are addressed to Mrs. J. Pentland, which means Mrs. Jared Pentland. Anson will be delighted, for these must be the letters which passed between Savina Pentland and her cousin, Toby Cane. Anson needed them to complete the book."

And then it occurred to her that there was something strange about the letters—in their having been hidden and perhaps found by the old lady belowstairs and then hidden away a second time. Old Mrs. Pentland must have found them there nearly forty years ago, when they still allowed her to wander about the house. Perhaps it had been on one of those rainy days when Anson and Sabine had come into the attic to play in this very corner with these same old toys—the days when Sabine refused to pretend that muddy water was claret. And now the old lady was remembering the discovery after all these years because the return of Sabine and the sound of her name had lighted some train of long-forgotten memories.

Seating herself on a broken, battered old trunk, she opened the first of the letters reverently so as not to dislodge the bits of violet sealing-wax that still clung to the edges, and almost at once she read with a swift sense of shock:

Carissima,

I waited last night in the cottage until eleven and when

you didn't come I knew he had not gone to Salem, after all, and was still there at Pentlands with you. . . .

She stopped reading. She understood it now. . . . The scamp Toby Cane had been more than merely a cousin to Savina Pentland; he had been her lover and that was why she **had** hidden the letters **away** beneath the beams of the vast unfinished attic, intending perhaps to destroy them one day. And then she had been drowned before there was time and the letters lay in their hiding-place until John Pentland's wife had discovered them one day by chance, only to hide them again, forgetting in the poor shocked mazes of her **mind what they were** or where they were hidden. They were the letters which Anson had been searching for.

But she saw at once that Anson would never use the letters in his book, for he would never bring into the open a scandal in the Pentland family, even though it was a scandal which had come to an end, tragically, nearly a century earlier and was now almost pure romance. She saw, of course, that a love affair between so radiant a creature as Savina Pentland and a scamp like Toby Cane would seem rather odd in a book called "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony." Perhaps it was better not to speak of the letters at all. Anson would manage somehow to destroy all the value there was in them; he would sacrifice truth to the gods of Respectability and Pretense.

Thrusting the letters into her pocket, she descended the dark stairway, and in the north wing Miss Egan met her to ask, almost with an air of impatience, "I suppose you didn't find anything?"

"No," said Olivia quickly, "nothing which could possibly have interested her."

"It's some queer idea she's hatched up," replied Miss Egan.

and looked at Olivia as if she doubted the truth of what she had said.

She did not go downstairs at once. Instead, she went to her own room and after bathing, seated herself in the chaise longue by the open window above the terrace, prepared to read the letters one by one. From below there arose a murmur of voices, one metallic and hard, the other nervous, thin, and high-pitched—Sabine's and Aunt Cassie's—as they sat on the terrace in acid conversation, each trying to outstay the other. Listening, Olivia decided that she was a little weary of them both this morning; it was the first time it had ever occurred to her that in a strange way there was a likeness between two women who seemed so different. That curious pair, who hated each other so heartily, had the same way of trying to pry into her life.

None of the letters bore any dates, so she fell to reading them in the order in which they had been found, beginning with the one which read:

Carissima,

I waited last night in the cottage until eleven and when you didn't come I knew he had not gone to Salem, after all, and was still there at Pentlands with you. . . .

She read on:

It's the thought of his being there beside you, even taking possession of you sometimes, that I can't bear. I see him sitting there in the drawing-room, looking at you—eating you with his eyes and pretending all the while that he is above the lusts of the flesh. The flesh! The flesh! You and I,

dearest, know the glories of the flesh. Sometimes I think I'm a coward not to kill him at once.

For God's sake, get rid of him somehow to-night. I can't pass another evening alone in the dark gloomy cottage waiting in vain. It is more than I can bear to sit there knowing that every minute, every second, may bring the sound of your step. Be merciful to me. Get rid of him somehow.

I have not touched a drop of anything since I last saw you. Are you satisfied with that?

I am sending this in a book by black Hannah. She will wait for an answer.

Slowly, as she read on and on through the mazes of the impetuous, passionate writing, the voices from the terrace below, the one raised now and a little angry, the other still metallic, hard and indifferent, grew more and more distant until presently she did not hear them at all and in the place of the sound her senses received another impression—that of a curious physical glow, stealing slowly through her whole body. It was as if there lay in that faded brown writing a smoldering fire that had never wholly died out and would never be extinguished until the letters themselves had been burned into ashes.

Word by word, line by line, page by page, the whole tragic, passionate legend came to recreate itself, until near the end she was able to see the three principal actors in it with the reality of life, as if they had never died at all but had gone on living in this old house, perhaps in this very room where she sat . . . the very room which once must have belonged to Savina Pentland.

She saw the husband, that Jared Pentland of whom no portrait existed because he would never spend money on such a luxury, as he must have been in life—a sly man, shrewd and pious and avaricious save when the strange dark passion for

his wife made of him an unbalanced creature. And Savina Pentland herself was there, as she looked out of the Ingres portrait—dark, voluptuous, reckless, with her bad enticing eyes—a woman who might easily be the ruin of a man like Jared Pentland. And somehow she was able to get a clear and vivid picture of the writer of those smoldering letters—a handsome scamp of a lover, dark like his cousin Savina, and given to drinking and gambling. But most of all she was aware of that direct, unashamed and burning passion that never had its roots in this stony New England soil beyond the windows of Pentlands. A man who frankly glorified the flesh! A waster! A seducer! And yet a man capable of this magnificent fire which leaped up from the yellow pages and warmed her through and through. It occurred to her then for the first time that there was something heroic and noble and beautiful in a passion so intense. For a moment she was even seized by the feeling that reading these letters was a kind of desecration.

They revealed, too, how Jared Pentland had looked upon his beautiful wife as a fine piece of property, an investment which gave him a sensual satisfaction and also glorified his house and dinner-table. (What Sabine called the "lower middle-class sense of property.") He must have loved her and hated her at once, in the way Higgins loved and hated the handsome red mare. He must have been proud of her and yet hated her because she possessed so completely the power of making a fool of him. The whole story moved against a background of family . . . the Pentland family. There were constant references to cousins and uncles and aunts and their suspicions and interference.

"It must have begun," thought Olivia, "even in those days."

Out of the letters she learned that the passion had begun in Rome when Savina Pentland was sitting for her portrait

by Ingres. Toby Cane had been there with her and afterwards she had gone with him to his lodgings; and when they had returned to the house at Durham (almost new then and the biggest country seat in all New England) they had met in the cottage—Brook Cottage, which still stood there within sight of Olivia's window—Brook Cottage, which after the drowning had been bought by Sabine's grandfather and then fallen into ruins and been restored again by the too-bright, vulgar, resplendent touch of O'Hara. It was an immensely complicated and intricate story which went back, back into the past and seemed to touch them all here in Durham.

"The roots of life at Pentlands," thought Olivia, "go down, down into the past. There are no new branches, no young, vigorous shoots."

She came at length to the last of the letters, which had buried in its midst the terrible revealing lines—

If you knew what delight it gives me to have you write that the child is ours beyond any doubt, that there cannot be the slightest doubt of it! The baby belongs to us . . . to us alone! It has nothing to do with him. I could not bear the idea of his thinking that the child is his if it was not that it makes your position secure. The thought tortures me but I am able to bear it because it leaves you safe and above suspicion.

Slowly, thoughtfully, as if unable to believe her eyes, she reread the lines through again, and then placed her hands against her head with a gesture of feeling suddenly weak and out of her mind.

She tried to think clearly. "Savina Pentland never had but one child, so far as I know . . . never but one. And that must have been Toby Cane's child."

There could be no doubt. It was all there, in writing.

The child was the child of Toby Cane and a woman who was born Savina Dalgedo. He was not a Pentland and none of his descendants had been Pentlands . . . not one.

They were not Pentlands at all save as the descendants of Savina and her lover had married among the Brahmins where Pentland blood was in every family. They were not Pentlands by blood and yet they were Pentlands beyond any question, in conduct, in point of view, in tradition. It occurred to Olivia for the first time how immense and terrible a thing was that environment, that air which held them all enchanted . . . all the cloud of prejudices and traditions and prides and small anxieties. It was a world so set, so powerful, so iron-bound that it had made Pentlands of people like Anson and Aunt Cassie, even like her father-in-law. It made Pentlands of people who were not Pentlands at all. She saw it now as an overwhelming, terrifying power that was a part of the old house. It stood rooted in the very soil of all the landscape that spread itself beyond her windows.

And in the midst of this realization she had a swift impulse to laugh, hysterically, for the picture of Anson had come to her suddenly . . . Anson pouring his whole soul into that immense glorification to be known as "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony."

Slowly, as the first shock melted away a little, she began to believe that the yellowed bits of paper were a sort of infernal machine, an instrument with the power of shattering a whole world. What was she to do with this thing—this curious symbol of a power that always won every struggle in one way or another, directly as in the case of Savina and her lover, or by taking its vengeance upon body or soul as it had done in the case of Aunt Cassie's poor, prying, scheming mind? And there was, too, the dark story of Horace Pentland, and the madness of the old woman in the north wing, and even those sudden terrible bouts of drinking which made

so fine a man as John Pentland into something very near to a beast.

It was as if a light of blinding clarity had been turned upon all the long procession of ancestors. She saw now that if "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony" was to have any value at all as truth it must be rewritten in the light of the struggle between the forces glorified by that drunken scamp Toby Cane and this other terrible force which seemed to be all about her everywhere, pressing even herself slowly into its own mold. It was an old struggle between those who chose to find their pleasure in this world and those who looked for the vague promise of a glorified future existence.

She could see Anson writing in his book, "In the present generation (192-) there exists Cassandra Pentland Struthers (Mrs. Edward Cane Struthers), a widow who has distinguished herself by her devotion to the Episcopal Church and to charity and good works. She resides in winter in Boston and in summer at her country house near Durham on the land claimed from the wilderness by the first Pentland, distinguished founder of the American family."

Yes, Anson would write just those words in his book. He would describe thus the old woman who sat belowstairs hoping all the while that Olivia would descend bearing the news of some new tragedy . . . that virginal old woman who had ruined the whole life of her husband and kept poor half-witted Miss Peavey a prisoner for nearly thirty years.

The murmur of voices died away presently and Olivia, looking out of the window, saw that it was Aunt Cassie who had won this time. She was standing in the garden looking down the drive with that malignant expression which sometimes appeared on her face in moments when she thought

herself alone. Far down the shadow-speckled drive, the figure of Sabine moved indolently away in the direction of Brook Cottage. Sabine, too, belonged in a way to the family; she had grown up enveloped in the powerful tradition which made Pentlands of people who were not Pentlands at all. Perhaps (thought Olivia) the key to Sabine's restless, unhappy existence also lay in the same dark struggle. Perhaps if one could penetrate deeply enough in the long family history one would find there the reasons for Sabine's hatred of this Durham world and the reasons why she had returned to a people she disliked with all the bitter, almost fanatic passion of her nature. There was in Sabine an element of cold cruelty.

At the sight of Olivia coming down the steps into the garden, Aunt Cassie turned and moved forward quickly with a look of expectancy, asking, "And how is the poor thing?"

And at Olivia's answer, "She's quiet now . . . sleeping. It's all passed," the looked changed to one of disappointment.

She said, with an abysmal sigh, "Ah, she will go on forever. She'll be alive long after I've gone to join dear Mr. Struthers."

"Invalids are like that," replied Olivia, by way of saying something. "They take such care of themselves." And almost at once, she thought, "Here I am playing the family game, pretending that she's not mad but only an invalid."

She had no feeling of resentment against the busy old woman; indeed it seemed to her at times that she had almost an affection for Aunt Cassie—the sort of affection one has for an animal or a bit of furniture which has been about almost as long as one can remember. And at the moment the figure of Aunt Cassie, the distant sight of Sabine, the bright garden full of flowers . . . all these things seemed to her melodramatic and unreal, for she was still living in

the Pentlands of Savina and Toby Cane. It was impossible to fix her attention on Aunt Cassie and her flutterings.

The old lady was saying, "You all seem to have grown very fond of this man O'Hara."

(What was she driving at now?) Aloud, Olivia said, "Why not? He's agreeable, intelligent . . . even distinguished in his way."

"Yes," said Aunt Cassie. "I've been discussing him with Sabine, and I've come to the conclusion that I may have been wrong about him. She thinks him a clever man with a great future." There was a pause and she added with an air of making a casual observation, "But what about his past? I mean where does he come from."

"I know all about it. He's been telling me. That's why I was late this morning."

For a time Aunt Cassie was silent, as if weighing some deep problem. At last she said, "I was wondering about seeing too much of him. He has a bad reputation with women. . . . At least, so I'm told."

Olivia laughed. "After all, Aunt Cassie, I'm a grown woman. I can look out for myself."

"Yes. . . . I know." She turned with a disarming smile of Christian sweetness. "I don't want you to think that I'm interfering, Olivia. It's the last thing I'd think of doing. But I was considering your own good. It's harmless enough, I'm sure. No one would ever think otherwise, knowing you, my dear. But it's what people will say. There was a scandal I believe about eight years ago . . . a road-house scandal!" She said this with an air of great suffering, as if the words "road-house scandal" seared her lips.

"I suppose so. Most men . . . politicians, I mean . . . have scandals connected with their names. It's part of the business, Aunt Cassie."

And she kept thinking with amazement of the industry of

the old lady—that she should have taken the trouble of going far back into O'Hara's past to find some definite thing against him. She did not doubt the ultimate truth of Aunt Cassie's insinuation. Aunt Cassie did not lie deliberately; there was always a grain of truth in her implications, though sometimes the poor grain lay buried so deeply beneath exaggerations that it was almost impossible to discover it. And a thing like that might easily be true about O'Hara. With a man like him you couldn't expect women to play the rôle they played with a man like Anson.

"It's only on account of what people will say," repeated Aunt Cassie.

"I've almost come to the conclusion that what people say doesn't really matter any longer. . . ."

Aunt Cassie began suddenly to pick a bouquet from the border beside her. "Oh, it's not you I'm worrying about, Olivia dear. But we have to consider others sometimes. . . . There's Sybil and Anson, and even the very name of Pentland. There's never been any such suspicion attached to it . . . ever."

It was incredible (thought Olivia) that any one would make such a statement, incredible anywhere else in the world. She wanted to ask, "What about your brother and old Mrs. Soames?" And in view of those letters that lay locked in her dressing-table. . . .

At that moment lunch was announced by Peters' appearance in the doorway. Olivia turned to Aunt Cassie, "You're staying, of course."

"No, I must go. You weren't expecting me."

So Olivia began the ancient game, played for so many years, of pressing Aunt Cassie to stay to lunch.

"It makes no difference," she said, "only another plate." And so on through a whole list of arguments that she had memorized long ago. And at last Aunt Cassie, with the air

of having been pressed beyond her endurance, yielded, and to Peters, who had also played the game for years, Olivia said, "Lay another place for Mrs. Struthers."

She had meant to stay all along. Lunching out saved both money and trouble, for Miss Peavey ate no more than a bird, at least not openly; and, **besides, there were things she** must find out at Pentlands, and other things which she must plan. In truth, wild horses could not have dragged her away.

As they entered the house, Aunt Cassie, carrying the bouquet she had plucked, said casually, "I met the Mannering boy on the road this morning and told him to come in to-night. I thought you wouldn't mind. He's very fond of Sybil, you know."

"No, of course not," replied Olivia. "I don't mind. But I'm afraid Sybil isn't very interested in him."

CHAPTER VIII

I

THE death of Horace Pentland was not an event to be kept quiet by so simple a means as a funeral that was almost secret; news of it leaked out and was carried here and there by ladies eager to rake up an old Pentland scandal in vengeance upon Aunt Cassie, the community's principal disseminator of calamities. It even penetrated at last the offices of the *Transcript*, which sent a request for an obituary of the dead man, for he was, after all, a member of one of Boston's proudest families. And then, without warning, the ghost of Horace Pentland reappeared suddenly in the most disconcerting of all quarters—Brook Cottage.

The ghost accompanied Sabine up the long drive one hot morning while Olivia sat listening to Aunt Cassie. Olivia noticed that Sabine approached them with an unaccustomed briskness, that all trace of the familiar indolence had vanished. As she reached the edge of the terrace, she called out with a bright look in her eyes, "I have news . . . of Cousin Horace."

She was enjoying the moment keenly, and the sight of her enjoyment must have filled Aunt Cassie, who knew her so well, with uneasiness. She took her own time about revealing the news, inquiring first after Aunt Cassie's health, and settling herself comfortably in one of the wicker chairs. She was an artist in the business of tormenting the old lady and she waited now to squeeze every drop of effect out of

her announcement. She was not to be hurried even by the expression which Aunt Cassie's face inevitably assumed at the mention of Horace Pentland—the expression of one who finds himself in the vicinity of a bad smell and is unable to escape.

At last, after lighting a cigarette and moving her chair out of the sun, Sabine announced in a flat voice, "Cousin Horace has left everything he possesses to me."

A look of passionate relief swept Aunt Cassie's face, a look which said, "Pooh! Pooh! Is that all?" She laughed—it was almost a titter, colored by mockery—and said, "Is that all? I imagine it doesn't make you a great heiress."

("Aunt Cassie," thought Olivia, "ought not to have given Sabine such an opportunity; she has said just what Sabine wanted her to say.")

Sabine answered her: "But you're wrong there, Aunt Cassie. It's not money that he's left, but furniture . . . furniture and bibelots . . . and it's a wonderful collection. I've seen it myself when I visited him at Mentone."

"You ought never to have gone. . . You certainly have lost all moral sense, Sabine. You've forgotten all that I taught you as a little girl."

Sabine ignored her. "You see, he worshiped such things, and he spent twenty years of his life collecting them."

"It seems improbable that they could be worth much . . . with as little money as Horace Pentland had . . . only what we let him have to live on."

Sabine smiled again, sardonically, perhaps because the tilt with Aunt Cassie proved so successful. "You're wrong again, Aunt Cassie. . . . They're worth a great deal . . . far more than he paid for them, because there are things in his collection which you couldn't buy elsewhere for any amount of money. He took to trading pieces off until his collection became nearly perfect." She paused for a moment, allowing

the knife to rest in the wound. "It's an immensely valuable collection. You see, I know about it because I used to see Cousin Horace every winter when I went to Rome. I knew more about him than any of you. He was a man of perfect taste in such things. He really knew."

Olivia sat all the while watching the scene with a quiet amusement. The triumph on this occasion was clearly Sabine's, and Sabine knew it. She sat there enjoying every moment of it, watching Aunt Cassie writhe at the thought of so valuable a heritage going out of the direct family, to so remote and hostile a connection. It was clearly a disaster ranking in importance with the historic loss of Savina Pentland's parure of pearls and emeralds at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. It was property lost forever that should have gone into the family fortune.

Sabine was opening the letter slowly, allowing the paper to crackle ominously, as if she knew that every crackle ran painfully up and down the spine of the old lady.

"It's the invoice from the Custom House," she said, lifting each of the five long sheets separately. "Five pages long . . . total value perhaps as much as seventy-five thousand dollars. . . . Of course there's not even any duty to pay, as they're all old things."

Aunt Cassie started, as if seized by a sudden pain, and Sabine continued. "He even left provision for shipping it . . . all save four or five big pieces which are being held at Mentone. There are eighteen cases in all."

She began to read the items one by one . . . cabinets, commodes, chairs, lusters, tables, pictures, bits of bronze, crystal and jade . . . all the long list of things which Horace Pentland had gathered with the loving care of a connoisseur during the long years of his exile; and in the midst of the reading, Aunt Cassie, unable any longer to control herself, interrupted, saying, "It seems to me he was an ungrateful,

disgusting man. It ought to have gone to my dear brother, who supported him all these years. I don't see why he left it all to a remote cousin like you."

Sabine delved again into the envelope. "Wait," she said. "He explains that point himself . . . in his own will." She opened a copy of this document and, searching for a moment, read, "To my cousin, Sabine Callendar (Mrs. Cane Callendar), of—Rue de Tilsitt, Paris, France, and Newport, Rhode Island, I leave all my collections of furniture, tapestries, bibelots, etc., in gratitude for her kindness to me over a period of many years and in return for her faith and understanding at a time when the rest of my family treated me as an outcast."

Aunt Cassie was beside herself. "And how should he have been treated if not as an outcast? He was an ungrateful, horrible wretch! It was Pentland money which supported him all his miserable life." She paused a moment for breath. "I always told my dear brother that twenty-five hundred a year was far more than Horace Pentland needed. And that is how he has spent it, to insult the very people who were kind to him."

Sabine put the papers back in the envelope and, looking up, said in her hard, metallic voice: "Money's not everything, as I told you once before, Aunt Cassie. I've always said that the trouble with the Pentlands . . . with most of Boston, for that matter . . . lies in the fact that they were lower middle-class shopkeepers to begin with and they've never lost any of the lower middle-class virtues . . . especially about money. They've been proud of living off the income of their incomes. . . . No, it wasn't money that Horace Pentland wanted. It was a little decency and kindness and intelligence. I fancy you got your money's worth out of the poor twenty-five hundred dollars you sent him every year. It was worth a great deal more than that to keep the truth under a bushel."

A long and painful silence followed this speech and Olivia, turning toward Sabine, tried to reproach her with a glance for speaking thus to the old lady. Aunt Cassie was being put to rout so pitifully, not only by Sabine, but by Horace Pentland, who had taken his vengeance shrewdly, long after he was dead, by striking at the Pentland sense of possessions, of property.

The light of triumph glittered in the green eyes of Sabine. She was paying back, bit by bit, the long account of her unhappy childhood; and she had not yet finished.

Olivia, watching the conflict with disinterest, was swept suddenly by a feeling of pity for the old lady. She broke the painful silence by asking them both to stay for lunch, but this time Aunt Cassie refused, in all sincerity, and Olivia did not press her, knowing that she could not bear to face the ironic grin of Sabine until she had rested and composed her face. Aunt Cassie seemed suddenly tired and old this morning. The indefatigable, meddling spirit seemed to droop, no longer flying proudly in the wind.

The queer, stuffy motor appeared suddenly on the drive, the back seat filled by the rotund form of Miss Peavey surrounded by four yapping Pekinese. The intricate veils which she wore on entering a motor streamed behind her. Aunt Cassie rose and, kissing Olivia with ostentation, turned to Sabine and went back again to the root of the matter. "I always told my dear brother," she repeated, "that twenty-five hundred a year was far too much for Horace Pentland."

The motor rattled off, and Sabine, laying the letter on the table beside her, said, "Of course, I don't want all this stuff of Cousin Horace's, but I'm determined it shan't go to her. If she had it the poor old man wouldn't rest in his grave. Besides, she wouldn't know what to do with it in a house filled with tassels and antimacassars and souvenirs of Uncle

Ned. She'd only sell it and invest the money in invincible securities."

"She's not well . . . the poor old thing," said Olivia. "She wouldn't have had the motor come for her if she'd been well. She's pretended all her life, and now she's really ill—she's terrified at the idea of death. She can't bear it."

The old relentless, cruel smile lighted Sabine's face. "No, now that the time has come she hasn't much faith in the Heaven she's preached all her life." There was a brief silence and Sabine added grimly, "She will certainly be a nuisance to Saint Peter."

But there was only sadness in Olivia's dark eyes, because she kept thinking what a shallow, futile life Aunt Cassie's had been. She had turned her back upon life from the beginning, even with the husband whom she married as a convenience. She kept thinking what a poor barren thing that life had been; how little of richness, of memories, it held, now that it was coming to an end.

Sabine was speaking again. "I know you're thinking that I'm heartless, but you don't know how cruel she was to me . . . what things she did to me as a child." Her voice softened a little, but in pity for herself and not for Aunt Cassie. It was as if the ghost of the queer, unhappy, red-haired little girl of her childhood had come suddenly to stand there beside them where the ghost of Horace Pentland had stood a little while before. The old ghosts were crowding about once more, even there on the terrace in the hot August sunlight in the beauty of Olivia's flowery garden.

"She sent me into the world," continued Sabine's hard voice, "knowing nothing but what was false, believing—the little I believed in anything—in false gods, thinking that marriage was no more than a business contract between two young people with fortunes. She called ignorance by the name of innocence and quoted the Bible and that milk-and-

water philosopher Emerson . . . 'dear Mr. Emerson' . . . whenever I asked her a direct, sensible question. . . . And all she accomplished was to give me a hunger for facts—hard, unvarnished facts—pleasant or unpleasant."

A kind of hot passion entered the metallic voice, so that it took on an unaccustomed warmth and beauty. "You don't know how much she is responsible for in my life. She . . . and all the others like her . . . killed my chance of happiness, of satisfaction. She cost me my husband. . . . What chance had I with a man who came from an older, wiser world . . . a world in which things were looked at squarely, and honestly as truth . . . a man who expected women to be women and not timid icebergs? No, I don't think I shall ever forgive her." She paused for a moment, thoughtfully, and then added, "And whatever she did, whatever cruelties she practised, whatever nonsense she preached, was always done in the name of duty and always 'for your own good, my dear.'"

Then abruptly, with a bitter smile, her whole manner changed and took on once more the old air of indolent, almost despairing, boredom. "I couldn't begin to tell you all, my dear. . . . It goes back too far. We're all rotten here . . . not so much rotten as desiccated, for there was never much blood in us to rot. . . . The roots go deep. . . . But I shan't bore you again with all this, I promise."

Olivia, listening, wanted to say, "You don't know how much blood there is in the Pentlands. . . . You don't know that they aren't Pentlands at all, but the children of Savina Dalgedo and Toby Cane. . . . But even that hasn't mattered. . . . The very air, the very earth of New England, has changed them, dried them up."

But she could not say it, for she knew that the story of those letters must never fall into the hands of the unscrupulous Sabine.

"It doesn't bore me," said Olivia quietly. "It doesn't bore me. I understand it much too well."

"In any case, we've spoiled enough of one fine day with it." Sabine lighted another cigarette and said with an abrupt change of tone, "About this furniture, Olivia. . . . I don't want it. I've a house full of such things in Paris. I shouldn't know what to do with it and I don't think I have the right to break it up and sell it. I want you to have it here at Pentlands. . . . Horace Pentland would be satisfied if it went to you and Cousin John. And it'll be an excuse to clear out some of the Victorian junk and some of the terrible early American stuff. Plenty of people will buy the early American things. The best of them are only bad imitations of the real things Horace Pentland collected, and you might as well have the real ones."

Olivia protested, but Sabine pushed the point, scarcely giving her time to speak. "I want you to do it. It will be a kindness to me . . . and after all, Horace Pentland's furniture ought to be here . . . in Pentlands. I'll take one or two things for Thérèse, and the rest you must keep, only nothing . . . not so much as a medallion or a snuff-box . . . is to go to Aunt Cassie. She hated him while he was alive. It would be wrong for her to possess anything belonging to him after he is dead. Besides," she added, "a little new furniture would do a great deal toward cheering up the house. It's always been rather spare and cold. It needs a little elegance and sense of luxury. There has never been any splendor in the Pentland family—or in all New England, for that matter."

2

At almost the same moment that Olivia and Sabine entered the old house to lunch, the figures of Sybil and Jean

appeared against the horizon on the rim of the great, bald hill crowned by the town burial-ground. Escaped at length from the eye of the curious, persistent Thérèse, they had come to the hill to eat their lunch in the open air. It was a brilliantly clear day and the famous view lay spread out beneath them like some vast map stretching away for a distance of nearly thirty miles. The marshes appeared green and dark, crossed and recrossed by a reticulation of tidal inlets frequented at nightfall by small boats which brought in whisky and rum from the open sea. There were, distantly visible, great piles of reddish rock rising from the endless white ribbon of beach, and far out on the amethyst sea a pair of white-sailed fishing-boats moved away in the direction of Gloucester. The white sails, so near to each other, carried a warm friendliness in a universe magnificent but also bleak and a little barren.

Coming over the rim of the hill the sudden revelation of the view halted them for a moment. The day was hot, but here on the great hill, remote from the damp, low-lying meadows, there was a fresh cool wind, almost a gale, blowing in from the open sea. Sybil, taking off her hat, tossed it to the ground and allowed the wind to blow her hair in a dark, tangled mass about the serious young face; and at the same moment Jean, seized by a sudden quick impulse, took her hand quietly in his. She did not attempt to draw it away; she simply stood there quietly, as if conscious only of the wild beauty of the landscape spread out below them and the sense of the boy's nearness to her. The old fear of depression and loneliness seemed to have melted away from her; here on this high brown hill, with all the world spread out beneath, it seemed to her that they were completely alone . . . the first and the last two people in all the world. She was aware that a perfect thing had happened to her, so perfect and so far

beyond the realm of her most romantic imaginings that it seemed scarcely real.

A flock of glistening white gulls, sweeping in from the sea, soared toward them screaming wildly, and she said, "We'd better find a place to eat."

She had taken from the hands of Sabine the task of showing Jean this little corner of his own country, and to-day they had come to see the view from the burial-ground and read the moldering queer old inscriptions on the tombstones. On entering the graveyard they came almost at once to the little corner allotted long ago to immigrants with the name of Pentland—a corner nearly filled now with neat rows of graves. By the side of the latest two, still new and covered with fresh sod, they halted, and she began in silence to separate the flowers she had brought from her mother's garden into two great bunches.

"This," she said, pointing to the grave at her feet, "is his. The other grave is Cousin Horace Pentland's, whom I never saw. He died in Mentone. . . . He was a first cousin of my grandfather."

Jean helped her to fill the two vases with water and place the flowers in them. When she had finished she stood up, with a sigh, very straight and slender, saying, "I wish you had known him, Jean. You would have liked him. He was always good-humored and he liked everything in the world . . . only he was never strong enough to do much but lie in bed or sit on the terrace in the sun."

The tears came quietly into her eyes, not at sorrow over the death of her brother, but at the pathos of his poor, weak existence; and Jean, moved by a quick sense of pity, took her hand again and this time kissed it, in the quaint, dignified foreign way he had of doing such things.

They knew each other better now, far better than on the enchanted morning by the edge of the river; and there were

times, like this, when to have spoken would have shattered the whole precious spell. There was less of shyness between them than of awe at the thing which had happened to them. At that moment he wanted to keep her forever thus, alone with him, on this high barren hill, to protect her and feel her always there at his side touching his arm gently. Here, in such a place, they would be safe from all the unhappiness and the trouble which in a vague way he knew was inevitably a part of living.

As they walked along the narrow path between the rows of chipped, worn old stones they halted now and then to read some half-faded, crumbling epitaph set forth in the vigorous, Biblical language of the first hardy settlers—sometimes amused, sometimes saddened, by the quaint sentiments. They passed rows of Sutherlands and Featherstones and Canes and Mannerings, all turned to dust long ago, the good New England names of that little corner of the world; and at length they came to a little colony of graves with the name Milford cut into each stone. Here there were no new monuments, for the family had disappeared long ago from the Durham world.

In the midst of these Jean halted suddenly and, bending over one of the stones, said, "Milford . . . Milford. . . . That's odd. I had a great-grandfather named Milford who came from this part of the country."

"There used to be a great many Milfords here, but there haven't been any since I can remember."

"My great-grandfather was a preacher," said Jean. "A Congregationalist. He led all his congregation into the Middle West. They founded the town my mother came from."

For a moment Sybil was silent. "Was his name Josiah Milford?" she asked.

"Yes. . . . That was his name."

"He came from Durham. And after he left, the church

died slowly. It's still standing . . . the big white church with the spire, on High Street. It's only a museum now."

Jean laughed. "Then we're not so far apart, after all. It's almost as if we were related."

"Yes, because a Pentland did marry a Milford once, a long time ago . . . more than a hundred years, I suppose."

The discovery made her happy in a vague way, perhaps because she knew it made him seem less what they called an "outsider" at Pentlands. It wouldn't be so hard to say to her father, "I want to marry Jean de Cyon. You know his ancestors came from Durham." The name of Milford would make an impression upon a man like her father, who made a religion of names; but, then, Jean had not even asked her to marry him yet. For some reason he had kept silent, saying nothing of marriage, and the silence clouded her happiness at being near him.

"It's odd," said Jean, suddenly absorbed, in the way of men, over this concrete business of ancestry. "Some of these Milfords must be direct ancestors of mine and I've no idea which ones they are."

"When we go down the hill," she said, "I'll take you to the meeting-house and show you the tablet that records the departure of the Reverend Josiah Milford and his congregation."

She answered him almost without thinking what she was saying, disappointed suddenly that the discovery should have broken in upon the perfection of the mood that united them a little while before.

They found a grassy spot sheltered from the August sun by the leaves of a stunted wild-cherry tree, all twisted by the sea winds, and there Sybil seated herself to open their basket and spread the lunch—the chicken, the crisp sandwiches, the

fruit. The whole thing seemed an adventure, as if they were alone on a desert island, and the small act gave her a new kind of pleasure, a sort of primitive delight in serving him while he stood looking down at her with a frank grin of admiration.

When she had finished he flung himself down at full length on the grass beside her, to eat with the appetite of a great, healthy man given to violent physical exercise. They ate almost in silence, saying very little, looking out over the marshes and the sea. From time to time she grew aware that he was watching her with a curious light in his blue eyes, and when they had finished, he sat up cross-legged like a tailor, to smoke; and presently, without looking at her he said, "A little while ago, when we first came up the hill, you let me take your hand, and you didn't mind."

"No," said Sybil swiftly. She had begun to tremble a little, frightened but wildly happy.

"Was it because . . . because . . ." He groped for a moment for words and, finding them, went quickly on, "because you feel as I do?"

She answered him in a whisper. "I don't know," she said, and suddenly she felt an overwhelming desire to weep.

"I mean," he said quietly, "that I feel we were made for each other . . . perfectly."

"Yes . . . Jean."

He did not wait for her to finish. He rushed on, overwhelming her in a quick burst of boyish passion. "I wish it wasn't necessary to talk. Words spoil everything. . . . They aren't good enough. . . . No, you must take me, Sybil. Sometimes I'm disagreeable and impatient and selfish . . . but you must take me. I'll do my best to reform. I'll make you happy. . . . I'll do anything for you. And we can go away together anywhere in the world . . . always together, never alone . . . just as we are here, on the top of this hill."

Without waiting for her to answer, he kissed her quickly, with a warm tenderness that made her weep once more. She said over and over again, "I'm so happy, Jean . . . so happy." And then, shamefacedly, "I must confess something. . . . I was afraid you'd never come back, and I wanted you always . . . from the very beginning. I meant to have you from the beginning . . . from that first day in Paris."

He lay with his head in her lap while she stroked the thick, red hair, in silence. There in the graveyard, high above the sea, they lost themselves in the illusion which overtakes such young lovers . . . that they had come already to the end of life . . . that, instead of beginning, it was already complete and perfect.

"I meant to have you always . . . Jean. And after you came here and didn't come over to see me . . . I decided to go after you . . . for fear that you'd escape again. I was shameless . . . and a fraud, too. . . . That morning by the river . . . I didn't come on you by accident. I knew you were there all the while. I hid in the thicket and waited for you."

"It wouldn't have made the least difference. I meant to have you, too." A sudden impatient frown shadowed the young face. "You won't let anything change you, will you? Nothing that any one might say . . . nothing that might happen . . . not anything?"

"Not anything," she repeated. "Not anything in the world. Nothing could change me."

"And you wouldn't mind going away from here with me?"

"No. . . . I'd like that. It's what I have always wanted. I'd be glad to go away."

"Even to the Argentine?"

"Anywhere . . . anywhere at all."

"We can be married very soon . . . before I leave . . .

and then we can go to Paris to see my mother." He sat up abruptly with an odd, troubled look on his face. "She's a wonderful woman, darling . . . beautiful and kind and charming."

"I thought she was lovely . . . that day in Paris . . . the most fascinating woman I'd ever seen, Jean dear."

He seemed not to be listening to her. The wind was beginning to die away with the heat of the afternoon, and far out on the amethyst sea the two sailing ships lay becalmed and motionless. Even the leaves of the twisted wild-cherry tree hung listlessly in the hot air. All the world about them had turned still and breathless.

Turning, he took both her hands and looked at her. "There's something I must tell you . . . Sybil . . . something you may not like. But you mustn't let it make any difference. . . . In the end things like that don't matter."

She interrupted him. "If it's about women . . . I don't care. I know what you are, Jean. . . . I'll never know any better than I know now. . . . I don't care."

"No . . . what I want to tell you isn't about women. It's about my mother." He looked at her directly, piercingly. "You see . . . my mother and my father were never married. Good old Monsieur de Cyon only adopted me. . . . I've no right to the name . . . really. My name is really John Shane. . . . They were never married, only it's not the way it sounds. She's a great lady, my mother, and she refused to marry my father because . . . she says . . . she says she found out that he wasn't what she thought him. He begged her to. He said it ruined his whole life . . . but she wouldn't marry him . . . not because she was weak, but because she was strong. You'll understand that when you come to know her."

What he said would have shocked her more deeply if she had not been caught in the swift passion of a rebellion against

all the world about her, all the prejudices and the misunderstandings that in her young wisdom she knew would be ranged against herself and Jean. In this mood, the mother of Jean became to her a sort of heroic symbol, a woman to be admired.

She leaned toward him. "It doesn't matter . . . not at all, Jean . . . things like that don't matter in the end. . . . All that matters is the future. . . ." She looked away from him and added in a low voice, "Besides, what I have to tell you is much worse." She pressed his hand savagely. "You won't let it change you? You'll not give me up? Maybe you know it already . . . that I have a grandmother who is mad. . . . She's been mad for years . . . almost all her life."

He kissed her quickly. "No, it won't matter. . . . Nothing could make me think of giving you up . . . nothing in the world."

"I'm so happy, Jean . . . and so peaceful . . . as if you had saved me . . . as if you'd changed all my life. I've been frightened sometimes. . . ."

But a sudden cloud had darkened the happiness . . . the cloud that was never absent from the house at Pentlands.

"You won't let your father keep us apart, Sybil. . . . He doesn't like me. . . . It's easy to see that."

"No, I shan't let him." She halted abruptly. "What I am going to say may sound dreadful. . . . I shouldn't take my father's word about anything. I wouldn't let him influence me. He's spoiled his own life and my mother's too. . . . I feel sorry for my father. . . . He's so blind . . . and he fusses so . . . always about things which don't matter."

For a long time they sat in silence, Sybil with her eyes closed leaning against him, when suddenly she heard him saying in a fierce whisper, "That damned Thérèse!" and looking up she saw at the rim of the hill beyond the decaying

tombstones, the stocky figure of Thérèse, armed with an insect-net and a knapsack full of lunch. She was standing with her legs rather well apart, staring at them out of her queer gray eyes with a mischievous, humorous expression. Behind her in a semicircle stood a little army of dirty Polish children she had recruited to help her collect bugs. They knew that she had followed them deliberately to spy on them, and they knew that she would pretend blandly that she had come upon them quite by accident.

"Shall we tell her?" asked Jean in a furious whisper.

"No . . . never tell anything in Durham."

The spell was broken now and Jean was angry. Rising, he shouted at Thérèse, "Go and chase your old bugs and leave us in peace!" He knew that, like her mother, Thérèse was watching them scientifically, as if they were a pair of insects.

3

Anson Pentland was not by nature a malicious man or even a very disagreeable one; his fussy activities on behalf of Morality arose from no suppressed, twisted impulse of his own toward vice. Indeed, he was a man of very few impulses—a rather stale, flat man who espoused the cause of Morality because it belonged to his tradition and therefore should be encouraged. He was, according to Sabine, something far worse than an abandoned lecher; he was a bore, and a not very intelligent one, who only saw straight along his own thin nose the tiny sector of the universe in which circumstance had placed him. After forty-nine years of staring, his gaze had turned myopic, and the very physical objects which surrounded him—his house, his office, his table, his desk, his pen—had come to be objects unique and glorified by their very presence as utensils of a society the most elevated

and perfect in existence. Possessed of an immense and intricate *savoir-faire* he lacked even a suspicion of *savoir-vivre*, and so tradition, custom, convention, had made of his life a shriveled affair, without initiative or individuality, slipping along the narrow groove of ways set and uninteresting. It was this, perhaps, which lay at the root of Sybil's pity for him.

Worshiping the habit of his stale world, he remained content and even amiable so long as no attack was made upon his dignity—a sacred and complicated affair which embraced his house, his friends, his clubs, his ancestors, even to the small possessions allowed him by his father. Yet this dignity was also a frail affair, easily subject to collapse . . . a sort of thin shell enclosing and protecting him. He guarded it with a maidenly and implacable zeal. When all the threats and pleadings of Aunt Cassie moved him to nothing more definite than an uneasy sort of evasion, a threat at any of the things which came within the realm of his dignity set loose an unsuspected, spiteful hatred.

He resented O'Hara because he knew perhaps that the Irishman regarded him and his world with cynicism; and it was O'Hara and Irishmen like him—Democrats (thought Anson) and therefore the scum of the earth—who had broken down the perfect, chilled, set model of Boston life. Sabine he hated for the same reasons; and from the very beginning he had taken a dislike to "that young de Cyon" because the young man seemed to stand entirely alone, independent of such dignities, without sign even of respect for them. And he was, too, inextricably allied with O'Hara and Sabine and the "outlandish Thérèse."

Olivia suspected that he grew shrill and hysterical only at times when he was tormented by a suspicion of their mockery. It was then that he became unaccountable for what he said and did . . . unaccountable as he had been on that night

after the ball. She understood that each day made him more acutely sensitive of his dignity, for he was beginning to interpret the smallest hint as an attack upon it.

Knowing these things, she had come to treat him always as a child, humoring and wheedling him until in the end she achieved what she desired, painlessly and surely. She treated him thus in the matter of refurnishing the house. Knowing that he was absorbed in finishing the final chapters of "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony," she suggested that he move his table into the distant "writing-room" where he would be less disturbed by family activities; and Anson, believing that at last his wife was impressed by the importance and dignity of his work, considered the suggestion an excellent one. He even smiled and thanked her.

Then, after having consulted old John Pentland and finding that he approved the plan, she began bit by bit to insinuate the furniture of Horace Pentland into the house. Sabine came daily to watch the progress of the change, to comment and admire and suggest changes. They found an odd excitement in the emergence of one beautiful object after another from its chrysalis of *emballage*; out of old rags and shavings there appeared the most exquisite of tables and cabinets, bits of chinoiserie, old books and engravings. One by one the ugly desk used by Mr. Lowell, the monstrous lamp presented by Mr. Longfellow, the anemic water-colors of Miss Maria Pentland . . . all the furnishings of the museum were moved into the vast old attic; until at length a new drawing-room emerged, resplendent and beautiful, civilized and warm and even a little exotic, dressed in all the treasures which Horace Pentland had spent his life in gathering with passionate care. Quietly and almost without its being noticed, the family skeleton took possession of the house, transforming its whole character.

The change produced in Aunt Cassie a variety of confused

and conflicting emotions. It seemed sacrilege to her that the worn, familiar, homely souvenirs of her father's "dear friends" should be relegated into the background, especially by the hand of Horace Pentland; yet it was impossible for her to overlook the actual value of the collection. She saw the objects less as things of rare beauty than in terms of dollars and cents. And, as she had said, "Pentland things ought to find a place in a Pentland house." She suspected Sabine of Machiavellian tactics and could not make up her mind whether Sabine and Horace Pentland had not triumphed in the end over herself and "dear Mr. Lowell" and "good, kind Mr. Longfellow."

Anson, strangely enough, liked the change, with reservations. For a long time he had been conscious of the fact that the drawing-room and much of the rest of the house seemed shabby and worn, and so, unworthy of such dignity as attached to the Pentland name.

He stood in the doorway of the drawing-room, surveying the transformation, and remarked, "The effect seems good . . . a little flamboyant, perhaps, and undignified for such a house, but on the whole . . . good . . . quite good. I myself rather prefer the plain early American furniture. . . ."

To which Sabine replied abruptly, "But it makes hard sitting."

Until now there had never been any music at Pentlands, for music was regarded in the family as something you listened to in concert-halls, dressed in your best clothes. Aunt Cassie, with Miss Peavey, had gone regularly for years each Friday afternoon, to sit hatless with a scarf over her head in Symphony Hall listening to "dear Colonel Higginson's orchestra" (which had fallen off so sadly since his death), but she had never learned to distinguish one melody from another. . . . Music at Pentlands had always been a cultural

duty, an exercise something akin to attending church. It made no more impression on Aunt Cassie than those occasional trips to Europe when, taking her own world with her, she stayed always at hotels where she would encounter friends from Boston and never be subjected to the strain of barbaric, unsympathetic faces and conversations.

And now, quite suddenly, music at Pentlands became something alive and colorful and human. The tinny old square piano disappeared and in its place there was a great new one bought by Olivia out of her own money. In the evenings the house echoed to the sound of Chopin and Brahms, Beethoven and Bach, and even such barbaric newcomers as Stravinsky and Ravel. Old Mrs. Soames came, when she was well enough, to sit in the most comfortable of the Regence chairs with old John Pentland at her side, listening while the shadow of youth returned to her half-blind old eyes. The sound of Jean's music penetrated sometimes as far as the room of the mad old woman in the north wing and into the writing-room, where it disturbed Anson working on "The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony."

And then one night, O'Hara came in after dinner, dressed in clothes cut rather too obviously along radically fashionable lines. It was the first time he had ever set foot on Pentland soil.

4

There were times now when Aunt Cassie told herself that Olivia's strange moods had vanished at last, leaving in their place the old docile, pleasant Olivia who had always had a way of smoothing out the troubles at Pentlands. The sudden perilous calm no longer settled over their conversations; Aunt Cassie was no longer fearful of "speaking her mind, frankly, for the good of all of them." Olivia listened to

her quietly, and it is true that she was happier in one sense because life at Pentlands seemed to be working itself out; but inwardly, she went her own silent way, grieving in solitude because she dared not add the burden of her grief to that of old John Pentland. Even Sabine, more subtle in such things than Aunt Cassie, came to feel herself quietly shut out from Olivia's confidence.

Sybil, slipping from childhood into womanhood, no longer depended upon her; she even grew withdrawn and secret about Jean, putting her mother off with empty phrases where once she had confided everything. Behind the pleasant, quiet exterior, it seemed to Olivia at times that she had never been so completely, so superbly, alone. She began to see that at Pentlands life came to arrange itself into a series of cubicles, each occupied by a soul shut in from all the others. And she came, for the first time in her life, to spend much time thinking of herself.

With the beginning of autumn she would be forty years old . . . on the verge of middle-age, a woman perhaps with a married daughter. Perhaps at forty-two she would be a grandmother (it seemed likely with such a pair as Sybil and young de Cyon) . . . a grandmother at forty-two with her hair still thick and black, her eyes bright, her face unwrinkled . . . a woman who at forty-two might pass for a woman ten years younger. A grandmother was a grandmother, no matter how youthful she appeared. As a grandmother she could not afford to make herself ridiculous.

She could perhaps persuade Sybil to wait a year or two and so put off the evil day, yet such an idea was even more abhorrent to her. The very panic which sometimes seized her at the thought of turning slowly into an old woman lay also at the root of her refusal to delay Sybil's marriage. What was happening to Sybil had never happened to herself and never could happen now; she was too old, too hard, even too

cynical. When one was young like Jean and Sybil, one had an endless store of faith and hope. There was still a glow over all life, and one ought to begin that way. Those first years—no matter what came afterward—would be the most precious in all their existence; and looking about her, she thought, "There are so few who ever have that chance, so few who can build upon a foundation so solid."

Sometimes there returned to her a sudden twinge of the ancient, shameful jealousy which she had felt for Sybil's youth that suffocating night on the terrace overlooking the sea. (In an odd way, all the summer unfolding itself slowly seemed to have grown out of that night.)

No, in the end she returned always to the same thought . . . that she would sacrifice everything to the perfection of this thing which existed between Sybil and the impatient, red-haired young man.

When she was honest with herself, she knew that she would have had no panic, no terror, save for O'Hara. Save for him she would have had no fear of growing old, of seeing Sybil married and finding herself a grandmother. She had prayed for all these things, even that Fate should send Sybil just such a lover; and now that her prayer was answered there were times when she wished wickedly that he had not come, or at least not so promptly. When she was honest, the answer was always the same . . . that O'Hara had come to occupy the larger part of her interest in existence.

In the most secret part of her soul, she no longer pretended that her feeling for him was only one of friendship. She was in love with him. She rose each morning joyfully to ride with him across the meadows, pleased that Sybil came with them less and less frequently; and on the days when he was kept in Boston a cloud seemed to darken all her thoughts and actions. She talked to him of his future, his plans, the progress of his campaign, as if already she

were his wife or his mistress. She played traitor to all her world whose fortunes rested on the success and power of his political enemies. She came to depend upon his quick sympathy. He had a Gaelic way of understanding her moods, her sudden melancholy, that had never existed in the phlegmatic, insensitive world of Pentlands.

She was honest with herself after the morning when, riding along the damp, secret paths of the birch thicket, he halted his horse abruptly and with a kind of anguish told her that he could no longer go on in the way they were going.

He said, "What do you want me to do? I am good for nothing. I can think of nothing but you . . . all day and all night. I go to Boston and try to work and all the while I'm thinking of you . . . thinking what is to be done. You must see what hell it is for me . . . to be near you like this and yet to be treated only as a friend."

Abruptly, when she turned and saw the suffering in his eyes, she knew there was no longer any doubt. She asked sadly, "What do you want me to do? What can I do? You make me feel that I am being the cheapest, silliest sort of woman." And in a low voice she added, "I don't mean to be, Michael. . . . I love you, Michael. . . . Now I've told you. You are the only man I've ever loved . . . even the smallest bit."

A kind of ecstatic joy took possession of him. He leaned over and kissed her, his own tanned face dampened by her tears.

"I'm so happy," she said, "and yet so sad. . . ."

"If you love me . . . then we can go our way . . . we need not think of any of the others."

"Oh, it's not so easy as that, my dear." She had never before been so conscious of his presence, of that strange sense of warmth and charm which he seemed to impose on everything about him.

"I do have to think of the others," she said. "Not my husband. . . . I don't think he even cares so long as the world knows nothing. But there's Sybil. . . . I can't make a fool of myself on account of Sybil."

She saw quickly that she had used the wrong phrase, that she had hurt him; striking without intention at the fear which he sometimes had that she thought him a common, vulgar Irish politician.

"Do you think that this thing between us . . . might be called 'making a fool of yourself'?" he asked with a faint shade of bitterness.

"No . . . you know me better than that. . . . You know I was thinking only of myself . . . as a middle-aged woman with a daughter ready to be married."

"But she *will* be married . . . soon . . . surely. Young de Cyon isn't the sort who waits."

"Yes . . . that's true . . . but even then." She turned quickly. "What do you want me to do? . . . Do you want me to be your mistress?"

"I want you for my own. . . . I want you to marry me."

"Do you want me as much as that?"

"I want you as much as that. . . . I can't bear the thought of sharing you . . . of having you belong to any one else."

"Oh . . . I've belonged to no one for a great many years now . . . not since Jack was born."

He went on, hurriedly, ardently. "It would change all my life. It would give me some reason to go on. . . . Save for you. . . . I'd chuck everything and go away. . . . I'm sick of it."

"And you want me for my own sake . . . not just because I'll help your career and give you an interest in life."

"For your own sake . . . nothing else, Olivia."

"You see, I ask because I've thought a great deal about it. I'm older than you, Michael. I seem young now. . . .

But at forty. . . . I'll be forty in the autumn . . . at forty being older makes a difference. It cuts short our time. . . . It's not as if we were in our twenties. . . . I ask you, too, because you are a clever man and must see these things, too."

"None of it makes any difference." He looked so tragically in earnest, there was such a light in his blue eyes, that her suspicions died. She believed him.

"But we can't marry . . . ever," she said, "so long as my husband is alive. He'll never divorce me nor let me divorce him. It's one of his passionate beliefs . . . that divorce is a wicked thing. Besides, there has never been a divorce in the Pentland family. There have been worse things," she said bitterly, "but never a divorce and Anson won't be the first to break any tradition."

"Will you talk to him?"

"Just now, Michael, I think I'd do anything . . . even that. But it will do no good." For a time they were both silent, caught in a profound feeling of hopelessness, and presently she said, "Can you go on like this for a little time . . . until Sybil is gone?"

"We're not twenty . . . either of us. We can't wait too long."

"I can't desert her yet. You don't know how it is at Pentlands. I've got to save her, even if I lose myself. I fancy they'll be married before winter . . . even before autumn . . . before he leaves. And then I shall be free. I couldn't . . . I couldn't be your mistress now, Michael . . . with Sybil still in there at Pentlands with me. . . . I may be quibbling. . . . I may sound silly, but it does make a difference . . . because perhaps I've lived among them for too long."

"You promise me that when she's gone you'll be free?"

"I promise you, Michael. . . . I've told you that I love

you . . . that you're the only man I've ever loved . . . even the smallest bit."

"Mrs. Callendar will help us. . . . She wants it."

"Oh, Sabine. . . ." She was startled. "You haven't spoken to her? You haven't told her anything?"

"No. . . . But you don't need to tell her such things. She has a way of knowing." After a moment he said, "Why, even Higgins wants it. He keeps saying to me, in an offhand sort of way, as if what he said meant nothing at all, 'Mrs. Pentland is a fine woman, sir. I've known her for years. Why, she's even helped me out of scrapes. But it's a pity she's shut up in that mausoleum with all those dead ones. She ought to have a husband who's a man. She's married to a living corpse.'"

Olivia flushed. "He has no right to talk that way. . . ."

"If you could hear him speak, you'd know that it's not disrespect, but because he worships you. He'd kiss the ground you walk over." And looking down, he added, "He says it's a pity that a thoroughbred like you is shut up at Pentlands. You mustn't mind his way of saying it. He's something of a horse-breeder and so he sees such things in the light of truth."

She knew, then, what O'Hara perhaps had failed to understand—that Higgins was touching the tragedy of her son, a son who should have been strong and full of life, like Jean. And a wild idea occurred to her—that she might still have a strong son, with O'Hara as the father, a son who would be a Pentland heir but without the Pentland taint. She might do what Savina Pentland had done. But she saw at once how absurd such an idea was; Anson would know well enough that it was not *his* son.

They rode on slowly and in silence while Olivia thought wearily round and round the dark, tangled maze in which she found herself. There seemed no way out of it. She was

caught, shut in a prison, at the very moment when her chance of happiness had come.

They came suddenly out of the thicket into the lane that led from Aunt Cassie's gazeboed house to Pentlands, and as they passed through the gate they saw Aunt Cassie's antiquated motor drawn up at the side of the road. The old lady was nowhere to be seen, but at the sound of hoofs the rotund form and silly face of Miss Peavey emerged from the bushes at one side, her bulging arms filled with great bunches of some weed.

She greeted Olivia and nodded to O'Hara. "I've been gathering catnip for my cats," she called out. "It grows fine and thick there in the damp ground by the spring."

Olivia smiled . . . a smile that gave her a kind of physical pain . . . and they rode on, conscious all the while that Miss Peavey's china-blue eyes were following them. She knew that Miss Peavey was too silly and innocent to suspect anything, but she would, beyond all doubt, go directly to Aunt Cassie with a detailed description of the encounter. Very little happened in Miss Peavey's life and such an encounter loomed large. Aunt Cassie would draw from her all the tiny details, such as the fact that Olivia looked as if she had been weeping.

Olivia turned to O'Hara. "There's nothing malicious about poor Miss Peavey," she said, "but she's a fool, which is far more dangerous."

CHAPTER IX

I

As the month of August moved toward an end there was no longer any doubt as to the "failing" of Aunt Cassie; it was confirmed by the very silence with which she surrounded the state of her health. For forty years one had discussed Aunt Cassie's health as one discussed the weather—a thing ever present in the consciousness of man about which one could do nothing, and now Aunt Cassie ceased suddenly to speak of her health at all. She even abandoned her habit of going about on foot and took to making her round of calls in the rattling motor which she protested to fear and loathe, and she came to lean more and more heavily upon the robust Miss Peavey for companionship and support. Claiming a fear of burglars, she had Miss Peavey's bed moved into the room next to hers and kept the door open between. She developed, Olivia discovered, an almost morbid terror of being left alone.

And so the depression of another illness came to add its weight to the burden of Jack's death and the grief of John Pentland. The task of battling the cloud of melancholy which hung over the old house grew more and more heavy upon Olivia's shoulders. Anson remained as usual indifferent to any changes in the life about him, living really in the past among all the sheaves of musty papers, a man not so much cold-blooded as bloodless, for there was nothing active nor calculating in his nature, but only a great inertia, a lack

of all fire. And it was impossible to turn to Sabine, who in an odd way seemed as cold and detached as Anson; she appeared to stand at a little distance, waiting, watching them all, even Olivia herself. And it was of course unthinkable to cloud the happiness of Sybil by going to her for support.

There was at least O'Hara, who came more and more frequently to Pentlands, now that the first visit had been made and the ice was broken. Anson encountered him once in the hallway, coldly; and he had become very friendly with old John Pentland. The two had a common interest in horses and dogs and cattle, and O'Hara, born in the Boston slums and knowing very little on any of these subjects, perhaps found the old gentleman a valuable source of information. He told Olivia, "I wouldn't come to the house except for you. I can't bear to think of you there . . . always alone . . . always troubled."

And in the evenings, while they played bridge or listened to Jean's music, she sometimes caught his eye, watching her with the old admiration, telling her that he was ready to support her no matter what happened.

A week after the encounter with Miss Peavey at the catnip-bed, Peters came to Olivia's room late in the afternoon to say, with a curious blend of respect and confidence, "He's ill again, Mrs. Pentland."

She knew what Peters meant; it was a kind of code between them. . . . The same words used so many times before.

She went quickly to the tall narrow library that smelled of dogs and apples and woodsmoke, knowing well enough what she would find there; and on opening the door she saw him at once, lying asleep in the big leather chair. The faint odor of whisky—a smell which had come long since to fill her always with a kind of horror—hung in the air, and on the mahogany desk stood three bottles, each nearly emptied. He slept quietly, one arm flung across his chest, the other

hanging to the floor, where the bony fingers rested limply against the Turkey-red carpet. There was something child-like in the peace which enveloped him. It seemed to Olivia that he was even free now of the troubles which long ago had left their mark in the harsh, bitter lines of the old face. The lines were gone, melted away somehow, drowned in the immense quiet of this artificial death. It was only thus, perhaps, that he slept quietly, untroubled by dreams. It was only thus that he ever escaped.

Standing in the doorway she watched him for a time, quietly, and then, turning, she said to Peters, "Will you tell Higgins?" and entering the door she closed the red-plush curtains, shutting out the late afternoon sunlight.

Higgins came, as he had done so many times before, to lock the door and sit there in the room, even sleeping on the worn leather divan, until John Pentland, wakening slowly and looking about in a dazed way, discovered his groom sitting in the same room, polishing a bridle or a pair of riding-boots. The little man was never idle. Something deep inside him demanded action: he must always be doing something. And so, after these melancholy occasions, a new odor clung to the library for days . . . the fresh, clean, healthy odor of leather and harness-soap.

For two days Higgins stayed in the library, leaving it only for meals, and for two days the old lady in the north wing went unvisited. Save for this single room, there was no evidence of any change in the order of life at Pentlands. Jean, in ignorance of what had happened, came in the evenings to play. But Sabine knew; and Aunt Cassie, who never asked questions concerning the mysterious absence of her brother lest she be told the truth. Anson, as usual, noticed nothing. The only real change lay in a sudden display of

sulking and ill-temper on the part of Miss Egan. The invincible nurse even quarreled with the cook, and was uncivil to Olivia, who thought, "What next is to happen? I shall be forced to look for a new nurse."

On the evening of the third day, just after dinner, Higgins opened the door and went in search of Olivia.

"The old gentleman is all right again," he said. "He's gone to bathe and he'd like to see you in the library in half an hour."

She found him there, seated by the big mahogany desk, bathed and spotlessly neat in clean linen; but he looked very old and weary, and beneath the tan of the leathery face there was a pallor which gave him a yellowish look. It was his habit never to refer in any way to these sad occasions, to behave always as if he had only been away for a day or two and wanted to hear what had happened during his absence.

Looking up at her, he said gravely, "I wanted to speak to you, Olivia. You weren't busy, were you? I didn't disturb you?"

"No," she said. "There's nothing. . . . Jean and Thérèse are here with Sybil. . . . That's all."

"Sybil," he repeated. "Sybil. . . . She's very happy these days, isn't she?" Olivia nodded and even smiled a little, in a warm, understanding way, so that he added, "Well, we mustn't spoil her happiness. We mustn't allow anything to happen to it."

A light came into the eyes of Olivia. "No; we mustn't," she repeated, and then, "She's a clever girl. . . . She knows what she wants from life, and that's the whole secret. Most people never know until it's too late."

A silence followed this speech, so eloquent, so full of unsaid things, that Olivia grew uneasy.

"I wanted to talk to you about . . ." he hesitated for a moment, and she saw that beneath the edge of the table his

hands were clenched so violently that the bony knuckles showed through the brown skin. "I wanted to talk to you about a great many things." He stirred and added abruptly, "First of all, there's my will."

He opened the desk and took out a packet of papers, separating them carefully into little piles before he spoke again. There was a weariness in all his movements. "I've made some changes," he said, "changes that you ought to know about . . . and there are one or two other things." He looked at her from under the fierce, shaggy eyebrows. "You see, I haven't long to live. I've no reason to expect to live forever and I want to leave things in perfect order, as they have always been."

To Olivia, sitting in silence, the conversation became suddenly painful. With each word she felt a wall rising about her, shutting her in, while the old man went on and on with an agonizing calmness, with an air of being certain that his will would be obeyed in death as it had always been in life.

"To begin with, you will all be left very rich . . . very rich . . . something over six million dollars. And it's solid money, Olivia . . . money not made by gambling, but money that's been saved and multiplied by careful living. For seventy-five years it's been the tradition of the family to live on the income of its income. We've managed to do it somehow, and in the end we're rich . . . very rich."

As he talked he kept fingering the papers nervously, placing them in neat little piles, arranging and rearranging them.

"And, as you know, Olivia, the money has been kept in a way so that the principal could never be spent. Sybil's grandchildren will be able to touch some of it . . . that is, if you are unwise enough to leave it to them that way."

Olivia looked up suddenly. "But why me? What have I to do with it?"

"That's what I'm coming to, Olivia dear. . . . It's because I'm leaving control of the whole fortune to you."

Suddenly, fiercely, she wanted none of it. She had a quick, passionate desire to seize all the neatly piled papers and burn them, to tear them into small bits and fling them out of the window.

"I don't want it!" she said. "Why should you leave it to me? I'm rich myself. I don't want it! I'm not a Pentland. . . . It's not my money. I've nothing to do with it." In spite of herself, there was a note of passionate resentment in her voice.

The shaggy brows raised faintly in a look of surprise

"To whom, if not to you?" he asked.

After a moment, she said, "Why, Anson . . . to Anson, I suppose."

"You don't really think that?"

"It's his money . . . Pentland money . . . not mine. I've all the money I need and more."

"It's yours, Olivia. . . ." He looked at her sharply. "You're more a Pentland than Anson, in spite of blood . . . in spite of name. You're more a Pentland than any of them. It's your money by every right in spite of anything you can do."

("But Anson isn't a Pentland, nor you either," thought Olivia.)

"It's you who are dependable, who are careful, who are honorable, Olivia. You're the strong one. When I die, you'll be the head of the family. . . . Surely, you know that . . . already."

("I," thought Olivia, "I who have been so giddy, who am planning to betray you all. . . . I am all this!")

"If I left it to Anson, it would be wasted, lost on foolish ideas. He's no idea of business. . . . There's a screw loose in Anson. . . . He's a crank. He'd be giving away this

good money to missionaries and queer committees . . . societies for meddling in the affairs of people. That wasn't what this fortune was made for. No, I won't have Pentland money squandered like that. . . ."

"And I," asked Olivia. "How do you know what I will do with it?"

He smiled softly, affectionately. "I know what you'll do with it, because I know you, Olivia, my dear. . . . You'll keep it safe and intact. . . . You're the Pentland of the family. You weren't when you came here, but you are now. I mean that you belong to the grand tradition of Pentlands . . . the old ones who hang out there in the hall. You're the only one left . . . for Sybil is too young. She's only a child . . . yet."

Olivia was silent, but beneath the silence there ran a torrent of cold, rebellious thoughts. Being a Pentland, then, was not a matter of blood: it was an idea, even an ideal. She thought fiercely, "I'm not a Pentland. I'm alive. I am myself. I've not been absorbed into nothing. All these years haven't changed me so much. They haven't made me into a Pentland." But for the sake of her affection, she could say none of these things. She only said, "How do you know what I'll do with it? How do you know that I mightn't squander it extravagantly—or—or even run away, taking all that was free with me. No one could stop me—no one."

He only repeated what he had said before, saying it more slowly this time, as if to impress her. "I know what you'll do with it, Olivia, because I know you, Olivia dear—you'd never do anything foolish or shameful—I know that—that's why I trust you."

And when she did not answer him, he asked, "You will accept it, won't you, Olivia? You'll have the help of a good lawyer . . . one of the best . . . John Mannering. It will please me, Olivia, and it will let the world know

what I think of you, what you have been to me all these years . . . all that Anson has never been . . . nor my own sister, Cassie." He leaned across the table, touching her white hand gently. "You will, Olivia?"

It was impossible to refuse, impossible even to protest any further, impossible to say that in this very moment she wanted only to run away, to escape, to leave them all forever, now that Sybil was safe. Looking away, she said in a low voice, "Yes."

It was impossible to desert him now . . . an old, tired man. The bond between them was too strong; it had existed for too long, since that first day she had come to Pentlands as Anson's bride and known that it was the father and not the son whom she respected. In a way, he had imposed upon her something of his own rugged, patriarchal strength. It seemed to her that she had been caught when she meant most to escape; and she was frightened, too, by the echoing thought that perhaps she had become, after all, a Pentland . . . hard, cautious, unadventurous and a little bitter, one for whom there was no fire or glamour in life, one who worshiped a harsh, changeable, invisible goddess called Duty. She kept thinking of Sabine's bitter remark about "the lower middle-class virtues of the Pentlands" . . . the lack of fire, the lack of splendor, of gallantry. And yet this fierce old man *was* gallant, in an odd fashion. . . . Even Sabine knew that.

He was talking again. "It's not only money that's been left to you. . . . There's Sybil, who's still too young to be let free. . . ."

"No," said Olivia with a quiet stubbornness, "she's not too young. She's to do as she pleases. I've tried to make her wiser than I was at her age . . . perhaps wiser than I've ever been . . . even now."

"Perhaps you're right, my dear. You have been so many

times . . . and things aren't the same as they were in my day . . . certainly not with young girls."

He took up the papers again, fussing over them in a curious, nervous way, very unlike his usual firm, unrelenting manner. She had a flash of insight which told her that he was behaving thus because he wanted to avoid looking at her. She hated confidences and she was afraid now that he was about to tell her things she preferred never to hear. She hated confidences and yet she seemed to be a person who attracted them always.

"And leaving Sybil out of it," he continued, "there's queer old Miss Haddon in Durham whom, as you know, we've taken care of for years; and there's Cassie, who's growing old and ill, I think. We can't leave her to half-witted Miss Peavey. I know my sister Cassie has been a burden to you. . . . She's been a burden to me, all my life. . . ." He smiled grimly. "I suppose you know that. . . ." Then, after a pause, he said, "But most of all, there's my wife."

His voice assumed a queer, unnatural quality, from which all feeling had been removed. It became like the voices of deaf persons who never hear the sounds they make.

"I can't leave her alone," he said. "Alone . . . with no one to care for her save a paid nurse. I couldn't die and know that there's no one to think of her . . . save that wretched, efficient Miss Egan . . . a stranger. No, Olivia . . . there's no one but you. . . . No one I can trust." He looked at her sharply. "You'll promise me to keep her here always . . . never to let them send her away? You'll promise?"

Again she was caught. "Of course," she said. "Of course I'll promise you that." What else was she to say?

"Because," he added, looking away from her once more, "because I owe her that . . . even after I'm dead. I couldn't rest if she were shut up somewhere . . . among strangers.

You see . . . once . . . once. . . ." He broke off sharply, as if what he had been about to say was unbearable.

With Olivia the sense of uneasiness changed into actual terror. She wanted to cry out, "Stop! . . . Don't go on!" But some instinct told her that he meant to go on and on to the very end, painfully, despite anything she could do.

"It's odd," he was saying quite calmly, "but there seem to be only women left . . . no men . . . for Anson is really an old woman."

Quietly, firmly, with the air of a man before a confessor, speaking almost as if she were invisible, impersonal, a creature who was a kind of machine, he went on, "And of course, Horace Pentland is dead, so we needn't think of him any longer. . . . But there's Mrs. Soames. . . ." He coughed and began again to weave the gaunt bony fingers in and out, as if what he had to say were drawn from the depth of his soul with a great agony. "There's Mrs. Soames," he repeated. "I know that you understand about her, Olivia . . . and I'm grateful to you for having been kind and human where none of the others would have been. I fancy we've given Beacon Hill and Commonwealth Avenue subject for conversation for thirty years . . . but I don't care about that. They've watched us . . . they've known every time I went up the steps of her brownstone house . . . the very hour I arrived and the hour I left. They have eyes, in our world, Olivia, even in the backs of their heads. You must remember that, my dear. They watch you . . . they see everything you do. They almost know what you think . . . and when they don't know, they make it up. That's one of the signs of a sick, decaying world . . . that they get their living vicariously . . . by watching some one else live . . . that they live always in the past. That's the only reason I ever felt sorry for Horace Pentland . . . the only reason that I

had sympathy for him. It was cruel that he should have been born in such a place."

The bitterness ran like acid through all the speech, through the very timbre of his voice. It burned in the fierce black eyes where the fire was not yet dead. Olivia believed that she was seeing him now for the first time, in his fulness, with nothing concealed. And as she listened, the old cloud of mystery that had always hidden him from her began to clear away like the fog lifting from the marshes in the early morning. She saw him now as he really was . . . a man fiercely masculine, bitter, clear-headed, and more human than the rest of them, who had never before betrayed himself even for an instant.

"But about Mrs. Soames. . . . If anything should happen to me, Olivia . . . if I should die first, I want you to be kind to her . . . for my sake and for hers. She's been patient and good to me for so long." The bitterness seemed to flow away a little now, leaving only a kindling warmth in its place. "She's been good to me. . . . She's always understood, Olivia, even before you came here to help me. You and she, Olivia, have made life worth living for me. She's been patient . . . more patient than you know. Sometimes I must have made life for her a hell on earth . . . but she's always been there, waiting, full of gentleness and sympathy. She's been ill most of the time you've known her . . . old and ill. You can't imagine how beautiful she once was."

"I know," said Olivia softly. "I remember seeing her when I first came to Pentlands . . . and Sabine has told me."

The name of Sabine appeared to rouse him suddenly. He sat up very straight and said, "Don't trust Sabine too far, Olivia. She belongs to us, after all. She's very like my sister Cassie . . . more like her than you can imagine. It's why they hate each other so. She's Cassie turned inside out,

as you might say. They'd both sacrifice everything for the sake of stirring up some trouble or calamity that would interest them. They live . . . vicariously."

Olivia would have interrupted him, defending Sabine and telling of the one real thing that had happened to her . . . the tragic love for her husband; she would have told him of all the abrupt, incoherent confidences Sabine had made her; but the old man gave her no chance. It seemed suddenly that he had become possessed, fiercely intent upon pouring out to her all the dark things he had kept hidden for so long.

(She kept thinking, "Why must I know all these things? Why must I take up the burden? Why was it that *I* should find those letters which had lain safe and hidden for so long?")

He was talking again quietly, the bony fingers weaving in and out their nervous futile pattern. "You see, Olivia. . . . You see, she takes drugs now . . . and there's no use in trying to cure her. She's old now, and it doesn't really matter. It's not as if she were young with all her life before her."

Almost without thinking, Olivia answered, "I know that."

He looked up quickly. "Know it?" he asked sharply. "How could you know it?"

"Sabine told me."

The head bowed again. "Oh, Sabine! Of course! She's dangerous. She knows far too much of the world. She's known too many strange people." And then he repeated again what he had said months ago after the ball. "She ought never to have come back here."

Into the midst of the strange, disjointed conversation there came presently the sound of music drifting toward them from the distant drawing-room. John Pentland, who was a little deaf, did not hear it at first, but after a little time he sat up, listening, and turning toward her, asked, "Is that Sybil's young man?"

"Yes."

"He's a nice boy, isn't he?"

"A very nice boy."

After a silence he asked, "What's the name of the thing he's playing?"

Olivia could not help smiling. "It's called *I'm in love again and the spring is a-comin'*. Jean brought it back from Paris. A friend of his wrote it . . . but names don't mean anything in music any more. No one listens to the words."

A shadow of amusement crossed his face. "Songs have queer names nowadays."

She would have escaped, then, going quietly away. She stirred and even made a gesture toward leaving, but he raised his hand in the way he had, making her feel that she must obey him as if she were a child.

"There are one or two more things you ought to know, Olivia . . . things that will help you to understand. Some one has to know them. Some one. . . ." He halted abruptly and again made a great effort to go on. The veins stood out sharply on the bony head.

"It's about *her* chiefly," he said, with the inevitable gesture toward the north wing. "She wasn't always that way. That's what I want to explain. You see . . . we were married when we were both very young. It was my father who wanted it. I was twenty and she was eighteen. My father had known her family always. They were cousins of ours, in a way, just as they were cousins of Sabine's. He had gone to school with her father and they belonged to the same club and she was an only child with a prospect of coming into a great fortune. It's an old story, you see, but a rather common one in our world. . . . All these things counted, and as for myself, I'd never had anything to do with women and I'd never been in love with any one. I was very young. I think they saw it as a perfect match . . . made in the hard, pros-

perous Heaven of their dreams. She was very pretty . . . you can see even now that she must have been very pretty.

. . . She was sweet, too, and innocent." He coughed, and continued with a great effort. "She had . . . she had a mind like a little child's. She knew nothing . . . a flower of innocence," he added with a strange savagery.

And then, as if the effort were too much for him, he paused and sat staring out of the window toward the sea. To Olivia it seemed that he had slipped back across the years to the time when the poor old lady had been young and perhaps curiously shy of his ardent wooing. A silence settled again over the room, so profound that this time the faint, distant roaring of the surf on the rocks became audible, and then again the sound of Jean's music breaking in upon them. He was playing another tune . . . not *I'm in love again*, but one called *Ukulele Lady*.

"I wish they'd stop that damned music!" said John Pentland.

"I'll go," began Olivia, rising.

"No . . . don't go. You mustn't go . . . not now." He seemed anxious, almost terrified, perhaps by the fear that if he did not tell now he would never tell her the long story that he must tell to some one. "No, don't go . . . not until I've finished, Olivia. I must finish. . . . I want you to know why such things happened as happened here yesterday and the day before in this room. . . . There's no excuse, but what I have to tell you may explain it . . . a little."

He rose and opening one of the bookcases, took out a bottle of whisky. Looking at her, he said, "Don't worry, Olivia, I shan't repeat it. It's only that I'm feeling weak. It will never happen again . . . what happened yesterday . . . never. I give you my word."

He poured out a full glass and seated himself once more drinking the stuff slowly while he talked.

"So we were married, I thinking that I was in love with her, because I knew nothing of such things . . . nothing. It wasn't really love, you see. . . . Olivia, I'm going to tell you the truth . . . everything . . . all of the truth. It wasn't really love, you see. It was only that she was the only woman I had ever approached in that way . . . and I was a strong, healthy young man."

He began to speak more and more slowly, as if each word were thrust out by an immense effort of will. "And she knew nothing . . . nothing at all. She was," he said bitterly, "all that a young woman was supposed to be. After the first night of the honeymoon, she was never quite the same again . . . never quite the same, Olivia. Do you know what that means? The honeymoon ended in a kind of madness, a fixed obsession. She'd been brought up to think of such things with a sacred horror and there was a touch of madness in her family. She was never the same again," he repeated in a melancholy voice, "and when Anson was born she went quite out of her head. She would not see me or speak to me. She fancied that I had disgraced her forever . . . and after that she could never be left alone without some one to watch her. She never went out again in the world. . . ."

The voice died away into a hoarse whisper. The glass of whisky had been emptied in a supreme effort to break through the shell which had closed him in from all the world, from Olivia, whom he cherished, perhaps even from Mrs. Soames, whom he had loved. In the distance the music still continued, this time as an accompaniment to the hard, loud voice of Thérèse singing, *I'm in love again and the spring is a-comin'*. . . . Thérèse, the dark, cynical, invincible Thérèse for whom life, from frogs to men, held very few secrets.

"But the story doesn't end there," continued John Pent-

land weakly. "It goes on . . . because I came to know what being in love might be when I met Mrs. Soames. . . . Only then," he said sadly, as if he saw the tragedy from far off as a thing which had little to do with him. "Only then," he repeated, "it was too late. After what I had done to *her*, it was too late to fall in love. I couldn't abandon her. It was impossible. It ought never to have happened." He straightened his tough old body and added, "I've told you all this, Olivia, because I wanted you to understand why sometimes I am . . ." He paused for a moment and then plunged ahead, "why I am a beast as I was yesterday. There have been times when it was the only way I could go on living. . . . And it harmed no one. There aren't many who ever knew about it. . . . I always hid myself. There was never any spectacle."

Slowly Olivia's white hand stole across the polished surface of the desk and touched the brown, bony one that lay there now, quietly, like a hawk come to rest. She said nothing and yet the simple gesture carried an eloquence of which no words were capable. It brought tears into the burning eyes for the second time in the life of John Pentland. He had wept only once before . . . on the night of his grandson's death. And they were not, Olivia knew, tears of self-pity, for there was no self-pity in the tough, rugged old body; they were tears at the spectacle of a tragedy in which he happened by accident to be concerned.

"I wanted you to know, my dear Olivia . . . that I have never been unfaithful to *her*, not once in all the years since our wedding-night. . . . I know the world will never believe it, but I wanted you to know because, you see, you and Mrs. Soames are the only ones who matter to me . . . and she *knows* that it is true."

And now that she knew the story was finished, she did not go away, because she knew that he wanted her to stay,

sitting there beside him in silence, touching his hand. He was the sort of man—a man, she thought, like Michael—who needed women about him.

After a long time, he turned suddenly and asked, "This boy of Sybil's—who is he? What is he like?"

"Sabine knows about him."

"It's that which makes me afraid. . . . He's out of her world and I'm not so sure that I like it. In Sabine's world it doesn't matter who a person is or where he comes from so long as he's clever and amusing."

"I've watched him. . . . I've talked with him. I think him all that a girl could ask . . . a girl like Sybil, I mean. . . . I shouldn't recommend him to a silly girl . . . he'd give such a wife a very bad time. Besides, I don't think we can do much about it. Sybil, I think, has decided."

"Has he asked her to marry him? Has he spoken to you?"

"I don't know whether he's asked her. He hasn't spoken to me. Young men don't bother about such things nowadays."

"But Anson won't like it. There'll be trouble . . . and Cassie, too."

"Yes . . . and still, if Sybil wants him, she'll have him. I've tried to teach her that in a case like this . . . well," she made a little gesture with her white hand, "that she should let nothing make any difference."

He sat thoughtfully for a long time, and at last, without looking up and almost as if speaking to himself, he said, "There was once an elopement in the family. . . . Jared and Savina Pentland were married that way."

"But that wasn't a happy match . . . not too happy," said Olivia; and immediately she knew that she had come near to betraying herself. A word or two more and he might have trapped her. She saw that it was impossible to add the burden of the letters to these other secrets.

As it was, he looked at her sharply, saying, "No one knows that. . . . One only knows that she was drowned."

She saw well enough what he meant to tell her, by that vague hint regarding Savina's elopement; only now he was back once more in the terrible shell; he was the mysterious, the false, John Pentland who could only hint but never speak directly.

The music ceased altogether in the drawing-room, leaving only the vague, distant, eternal pounding of the surf on the red rocks, and once the distant echo of a footstep coming from the north wing. The old man said presently, "So she wasn't falling in love with this man O'Hara, after all? There wasn't any need for worry?"

"No, she never thought of him in that way, even for a moment. . . . To her he seems an old man. . . . We mustn't forget how young she is."

"He's not a bad sort," replied the old man. "I've grown fond of him, and Higgins thinks he's a fine fellow. I'm inclined to trust Higgins. He has an instinct about people . . . the same as he has about the weather." He paused for a moment, and then continued, "Still, I think we'd best be careful about him. He's a clever Irishman on the make . . . and such gentlemen need watching. They're usually thinking only of themselves."

"Perhaps," said Olivia, in a whisper. "Perhaps. . . ."

The silence was broken by the whirring and banging of the clock in the hall making ready to strike eleven. The evening had slipped away quickly, veiled in a mist of unreality. At last the truth had been spoken at Pentlands—the grim, unadorned, terrible truth; and Olivia, who had hungered for it for so long, found herself shaken.

John Pentland rose slowly, painfully, for he had grown stiff and brittle with the passing of the summer. "It's eleven, Olivia. You'd better go to bed and get some rest."

She did not go to her own room, because it would have been impossible to sleep, and she could not go to the drawing-room to face, in the mood which held her captive, such young faces as those of Jean and Thérèse and Sybil. At the moment she could not bear the thought of any enclosed place, of a room or even a place covered by a roof which shut out the open sky. She had need of the air and that healing sense of freedom and oblivion which the sight of the marshes and the sea sometimes brought to her. She wanted to breathe deeply the fresh salty atmosphere, to run, to escape somewhere. Indeed, for a moment she succumbed to a sense of panic, as she had done on the other hot night when O'Hara followed her into the garden.

She went out across the terrace and, wandering aimlessly, found herself presently moving beneath the trees in the direction of the marshes and the sea. This last night of August was hot and clear save for the faint, blue-white mist that always hung above the lower meadows. There had been times in the past when the thought of crossing the lonely meadows, of wandering the shadowed lanes in the darkness, had frightened her, but to-night such an adventure seemed only restful and quiet, perhaps because she believed that she could encounter there nothing more terrible than the confidences of John Pentland. She was acutely aware, as she had been on that other evening, of the breathless beauty of the night, of the velvety shadows along the hedges and ditches, of the brilliance of the stars, of the distant foaming white line of the sea and the rich, fertile odor of the pastures and marshes.

And presently, when she had grown a little more calm, she tried to bring some order out of the chaos that filled

her body and spirit. It seemed to her that all life had become hopelessly muddled and confused. She was aware in some way, almost without knowing why, that the old man had tricked her, turning her will easily to his own desires, changing all the prospect of the future. She had known always that he was strong and in his way invincible, but until to-night she had never known the full greatness of his strength . . . how relentless, even how unscrupulous he could be; for he had been unscrupulous, unfair, in the way he had used every weapon at hand . . . every sentiment, every memory . . . to achieve his will. There had been no fierce struggle in the open; it was far more subtle than that. He had subdued her without her knowing it, aided perhaps by all that dark force which had the power of changing them all . . . even the children of Savina Dalgado and Toby Cane into "Pentlands."

Thinking bitterly of what had passed, she came to see that his strength rested upon the foundation of his virtue, his *rightness*. One could say—indeed, one could believe it as one believed that the sun had risen yesterday—that all his life had been tragically foolish and quixotic, fantastically devoted to the hard, uncompromising ideal of what a Pentland ought to be; and yet . . . yet one knew that he had been right, even perhaps heroic; one respected his uncompromising strength. He had made a wreck of his own happiness and driven poor old Mrs. Soames to seek peace in the Nirvana of drugs; and yet for her, he was the whole of life: she lived only for him. This code of his was hard, cruel, inhuman, sacrificing everything to its observance. . . . "Even," thought Olivia, "to sacrificing me along with himself. But I will not be sacrificed. I will escape!"

And after a long time she began to see slowly what it was that lay at the bottom of the iron power he had over people, the strength which none of them had been able to resist. It

was a simple thing . . . simply that he *believed*, passionately, relentlessly, as those first Puritans had done.

The others all about her did not matter. Not one of them had any power over her . . . not Anson, nor Aunt Cassie, nor Sabine, nor Bishop Smallwood. None of them played any part in the course of her life. They did not matter. She had no fear of them; rather they seemed to her now fussy and pitiful.

But John Pentland *believed*. It was that which made the difference.

Stumbling along half-blindly, she found herself presently at the bridge where the lane from Pentlands crossed the river on its way to Brook Cottage. Since she had been a little girl, the sight of water had exerted a strange spell upon her . . . the sight of a river, a lake, but most of all the open sea; she had always been drawn toward these things like a bit of iron toward a magnet; and now, finding herself at the bridge, she halted, and stood looking over the stone parapet in the shadow of the hawthorn-bushes that grew close to the water's edge, down on the dark, still pool below her. The water was black and in it the bright little stars glittered like diamonds scattered over its surface. The warm, rich odor of cattle filled the air, touched by the faint, ghostly perfume of the last white nympeas that bordered the pool.

And while she stood there, bathed in the stillness of the dark solitude, she began to understand a little what had really passed between them in the room smelling of whisky and saddle-soap. She saw how the whole tragedy of John Pentland and his life had been born of the stupidity, the ignorance, the hypocrisy of others. and she saw, too, that he was beyond all doubt the grandson of the Toby Cane who had written those wild passionate letters glorifying the flesh; only

John Pentland had found himself caught in the prison of that other terrible thing—the code in which he had been trained, in which he *believed*. She saw now that it was not strange that he sought escape from reality by shutting himself in and drinking himself into a stupor. He had been caught, tragically, between those two powerful forces. He thought himself a Pentland and all the while there burned in him the fire that lay in Toby Cane's letters and in the wanton look that was fixed forever in the portrait of Savina Pentland. She kept seeing him as he said, "I have never been unfaithful to *her*, not once in all the years since our wedding-night. . . . I wanted you to know because, you see, you and Mrs. Soames are the only ones who matter to me . . . and she *knows* that it is true."

It seemed to her that this fidelity was a terrible, a wicked, thing.

And she came to understand that through all their talk together, the thought, the idea, of Michael had been always present. It was almost as if they had been speaking all the while about Michael and herself. A dozen times the old man had touched upon it, vaguely but surely. She had no doubts that Aunt Cassie had long since learned all there was to learn from Miss Peavey of the encounter by the catnip-bed, and she was certain that she had taken the information to her brother. Still, there was nothing definite in anything Miss Peavey had seen, very little that was even suspicious. And yet, as she looked back upon her talk with the old man, it seemed to her that in a dozen ways, by words, by intonation, by glances, he had implied that he knew the secret. Even in the end when, cruelly, he had with an uncanny sureness touched the one fear, the one suspicion that marred her love for Michael, by saying in the most casual way, "Still, I think we'd better be careful of him. He's a clever Irishman

on the make . . . and such gentlemen need watching. They're usually thinking only of themselves."

And then the most fantastic of all thoughts occurred to her . . . that all their talk together, even the painful, tragic confidence made with such an heroic effort, was directed at herself. He had done all this—he had emerged from his shell of reticence, he had humiliated his fierce pride—all to force her to give up Michael, to force her to sacrifice herself on the altar of that fantastic ideal in which he believed.

And she was afraid because he was so strong; because he had asked her to do nothing that he himself had not done.

She would never know for certain. She saw that, after all, the John Pentland she had left a little while before still remained an illusion, veiled in mystery, unfathomable to her, perhaps forever. She had not seen him at all.

Standing there on the bridge in the black shadow of the hawthorns, all sense of time or space, of the world about her, faded out of existence, so that she was aware of herself only as a creature who was suffering. She thought, "Perhaps he is right. Perhaps I have become like them, and that is why this struggle goes on and on. Perhaps if I were an ordinary person . . . sane and simple . . . like Higgins . . . there would be no struggle and no doubts, no terror of simply *acting*, without hesitation."

She remembered what the old man had said of a world in which all action had become paralyzed, where one was content simply to watch others act, to live vicariously. The word "sane" had come to her quite naturally and easily as the exact word to describe a state of mind opposed to that which existed perpetually at Pentlands, and the thought terrified her that perhaps this thing which one called "being a Pentland," this state of enchantment, was, after all, only a disease, a kind

of madness that paralyzed all power of action. One came to live in the past, to acknowledge debts of honor and duty to people who had been dead for a century and more.

"Once," she thought, "I must have had the power of doing what I wanted to do, what I thought right."

And she thought again of what Sabine had said of New England as "a place where thoughts became higher and fewer," where every action became a problem of moral conduct, an exercise in transcendentalism. It was passing now, even from New England, though it still clung to the world of Pentlands, along with the souvenirs of celebrated "dear friends." Even stowing the souvenirs away in the attic had changed nothing. It was passing all about Pentlands; there was nothing of this sort in the New England that belonged to O'Hara and Higgins and the Polish mill-workers of Durham. The village itself had become a new and different place.

In the midst of this rebellion, she became aware, with that strange acuteness which seemed to touch all her senses, that she was no longer alone on the bridge in the midst of empty, mist-veiled meadows. She knew suddenly and with a curious certainty that there were others somewhere near her in the darkness, perhaps watching her, and she had for a moment a wave of the quick, chilling fear which sometimes overtook her at Pentlands at the times when she had a sense of figures surrounding her who could neither be seen nor touched. And almost at once she distinguished, emerging from the mist that blanketed the meadows, the figures of two people, a man and a woman, walking very close to each other, their arms entwined. For a moment she thought, "Am I really mad? Am I seeing ghosts in reality?" The fantastic idea occurred to her that the two figures were perhaps Savina Pentland and Toby Cane risen from their lost grave in the sea to wander across the meadows and marshes of Pentland. Moving

through the drifting, starlit mist, they seemed vague and indistinct and watery, like creatures come up out of the water. She fancied them, all dripping and wet, emerging from the waves and crossing the white rim of beach on their way toward the big old house. . . .

The sight, strangely enough, filled her with no sense of horror, but only with fascination.

And then, as they drew nearer, she recognized the man—something at first vaguely familiar in the cocky, strutting walk. She knew the bandy legs and was filled suddenly with a desire to laugh wildly and hysterically. It was only the rabbitlike Higgins engaged in some new conquest. Quietly she stepped farther into the shadow of the hawthorns and the pair passed her, so closely that she might have reached out her hand and touched them. It was only then that she recognized the woman. It was no Polish girl from the village, this time. It was Miss Egan—the starched, the efficient Miss Egan, whom Higgins had seduced. She was leaning on him as they walked—a strange, broken, feminine Miss Egan whom Olivia had never seen before.

At once she thought, "Old Mrs. Pentland has been left alone. Anything might happen. I must hurry back to the house." And she had a quick burst of anger at the deceit of the nurse, followed by a flash of intuition which seemed to clarify all that had been happening since the hot night early in the summer when she had seen Higgins leaping the wall like a goat to escape the glare of the motor-lights. The mysterious woman who had disappeared over the wall that night *was* Miss Egan. She had been leaving the old woman alone night after night since then; it explained the sudden impatience and bad temper of these last two days when Higgins had been shut up with the old man.

She saw it all now—all that had happened in the past two months—in an orderly procession of events. The old woman

had escaped, leading the way to Savina Pentland's letters, because Miss Egan had deserted her post to wander across the meadows at the call of that mysterious, powerful force which seemed to take possession of the countryside at nightfall. It was in the air again to-night, all about her . . . in the air, in the fields, the sound of the distant sea, the smell of cattle and of ripening seeds . . . as it had been on the night when Michael followed her out into the garden.

In a way, the whole chain of events was the manifestation of the disturbing force which had in the end revealed the secret of Savina's letters. It had mocked them, and now the secret weighed on Olivia as a thing which she must tell some one, which she could no longer keep to herself. It burned her, too, with the sense of possessing a terrible and shameful weapon which she might use if pushed beyond endurance.

Slowly, after the two lovers had disappeared, she made her way back again toward the old house, which loomed square and black against the deep blue of the sky, and as she walked, her anger at Miss Egan's betrayal of trust seemed to melt mysteriously away. She would speak to Miss Egan tomorrow, or the day after; in any case, the affair had been going on all summer and no harm had come of it—no harm save the discovery of Savina Pentland's letters. She felt a sudden sympathy for this starched, efficient woman whom she had always disliked; she saw that Miss Egan's life, after all, was a horrible thing—a procession of days spent in the company of a mad old woman. It was, Olivia thought, something like her own existence. . . .

And it occurred to her at the same time that it would be difficult to explain to so sharp-witted a creature as Miss Egan why she herself should have been on the bridge at such an hour of the night. It was as if everything, each little thought

and action, became more and more tangled and hopeless, more and more intricate and complicated with the passing of each day. There was no way out save to cut the web boldly and escape.

"No," she thought, "I will not stay. . . . I will not sacrifice myself. To-morrow I shall tell Michael that when Sybil is gone, I will do whatever he wants me to do. . . ."

When she reached the house she found it dark save for the light which burned perpetually in the big hall illuminating faintly the rows of portraits; and silent save for the creakings which afflicted it in the stillness of the night.

3

She was wakened early, after having slept badly, with the news that Michael had been kept in Boston the night before and would not be able to ride with her as usual. When the maid had gone away she grew depressed, for she had counted upon seeing him and coming to some definite plan. For a moment she even experienced a vague jealousy, which she put away at once as shameful. It was not, she told herself, that he ever neglected her; it was only that he grew more and more occupied as the autumn approached. It was not that there was any other woman involved; she felt certain of him. And yet there remained that strange, gnawing little suspicion, placed in her mind when John Pentland had said, "He's a clever Irishman on the make . . . and such gentlemen need watching."

After all, she knew nothing of him save what he had chosen to tell her. He was a free man, independent, a buccaneer, who could do as he chose in life. Why should he ruin himself for her?

She rose at last, determined to ride alone, in the hope that the fresh morning air and the exercise would put to rout

this cloud of morbidity which had kept possession of her from the moment she left John Pentland in the library.

As she dressed, she thought, "Day after to-morrow I shall be forty years old. Perhaps that's the reason why I feel tired and morbid. Perhaps I'm on the borderland of middle-age. But that can't be. I am strong and well and I look young, despite everything. I am tired because of what happened last night." And then it occurred to her that perhaps Mrs. Soames had known these same thoughts again and again during her long devotion to John Pentland. "No," she told herself, "whatever happens I shall never lead the life she has led. Anything is better than that . . . anything."

It seemed strange to her to awaken and find that nothing was changed in all the world about her. After what had happened the night before in the library and on the dark meadows, there should have been some mark left upon the life at Pentlands. The very house, the very landscape, should have kept some record of what had happened; and yet everything was the same. She experienced a faint shock of surprise to find the sun shining brightly, to see Higgins in the stable-yard saddling her horse and whistling all the while in an excess of high spirits, to hear the distant barking of the beagies, and to see Sybil crossing the meadow toward the river to meet Jean. Everything was the same, even Higgins, whom she had mistaken for a ghost as he crossed the mist-hung meadows a few hours earlier. It was as if there were two realities at Pentlands—one, it might have been said, of the daylight and the other of the darkness; as if one life—a secret, hidden one—lay beneath the bright, pleasant surface of a world composed of green fields and trees, the sound of barking dogs, the faint odor of coffee arising from the kitchen, and the sound of a groom whistling while he saddled a thoroughbred. It was a misfortune that chance had given her an

insight into both the bright, pleasant world and that other dark, nebulous one. The others, save perhaps old John Pentland, saw only this bright, easy life that had begun to stir all about her.

And she reflected that a stranger coming to Pentlands would find it a pleasant, comfortable house, where the life was easy and even luxurious, where all of them were protected by wealth. He would find them all rather pleasant, normal, friendly people of a family respected and even distinguished. He would say, "Here is a world that is solid and comfortable and sound."

Yes, it would appear thus to a stranger, so it might be that the dark, fearful world existed only in her imagination. Perhaps she herself was ill, a little unbalanced and morbid . . . perhaps a little touched like the old woman in the north wing.

Still, she thought, most houses, most families, must have such double lives—one which the world saw and one which remained hidden.

As she pulled on her boots she heard the voice of Higgins, noisy and cheerful, exchanging amorous jests with the new Irish kitchen-maid, marking her already for his own.

She rode listlessly, allowing the mare to lead through the birch thicket over the cool dark paths which she and Michael always followed. The morning air did not change her spirits. There was something sad in riding alone through the long green tunnel.

When at last she came out on the opposite side by the patch of catnip where they had encountered Miss Peavey, she saw a Ford drawn up by the side of the road and a man standing beside it, smoking a cigar and regarding the engine as if he were in trouble. She saw no more than that and

would have passed him without troubling to look a second time, when she heard herself being addressed.

"You're Mrs. Pentland, aren't you?"

She drew in the mare. "Yes, I'm Mrs. Pentland."

He was a little man, dressed rather too neatly in a suit of checkered stuff, with a high, stiff white collar which appeared to be strangling him. He wore nose-glasses and his face had a look of having been highly polished. As she turned, he took off his straw hat and with a great show of manners came forward, bowing and smiling cordially.

"Well," he said, "I'm glad to hear that I'm right. I hoped I might meet you here. It's a great pleasure to know you, Mrs. Pentland. My name is Gavin. . . . I'm by way of being a friend of Michael O'Hara."

"Oh!" said Olivia. "How do you do?"

"You're not in a great hurry, I hope?" he asked. "I'd like to have a word or two with you."

"No, I'm not in a great hurry."

It was impossible to imagine what this fussy little man, standing in the middle of the road, bowing and smiling, could have to say to her.

Still holding his hat in his hand, he tossed away the end of his cigar and said, "It's about a very delicate matter, Mrs. Pentland. It has to do with Mr. O'Hara's campaign. I suppose you know about that. You're a friend of his, I believe?"

"Why, yes," she said coldly. "We ride together."

He coughed and, clearly ill at ease, set off on a tangent from the main subject. "You see, I'm a great friend of his. In fact, we grew up together . . . lived in the same ward and fought together as boys. You mightn't think it to see us together . . . because he's such a clever one. He's made for big things and I'm not. . . . I'm . . . I'm just plain John Gavin. But we're friends, all the same, just the same as ever . . . just as if he wasn't a big man. That's one thing

about Michael. He never goes back on his old friends, no matter how great he gets to be."

A light of adoration shone in the blue eyes of the little man. It was, Olivia thought, as if he were speaking of God; only clearly he thought of Michael O'Hara as greater than God. If Michael affected men like this, it was easy to see why he was so successful.

The little man kept interrupting himself with apologies. "I shan't keep you long, Mrs. Pentland . . . only a moment. You see I thought it was better if I saw you here instead of coming to the house." Suddenly screwing up his shiny face, he became intensely serious. "It's like this, Mrs. Pentland. . . . I know you're a good friend of his and you wish him well. You want to see him get elected . . . even though you people out here don't hold much with the Democratic party."

"Yes," said Olivia. "That's true."

"Well," he continued with a visible effort, "Michael's a good friend of mine. I'm sort of a bodyguard to him. Of course, I never come out here. I don't belong in this world. . . . I'd feel sort of funny out here."

(Olivia found herself feeling respect for the little man. He was so simple and so honest and he so obviously worshiped Michael.)

"You see . . . I know all about Michael. I've been through a great deal with him . . . and he's not himself just now. There's something wrong. He ain't interested in his work. He acts as if he'd be willing to chuck his whole career overboard . . . and I can't let him do that. None of his friends . . . can't let him do it. We can't get him to take a proper interest in his affairs. Usually, he manages everything . . . better than any one else could." He became suddenly confidential, closing one eye. "D'you know

what I think is the matter? I've been watching him and I've got an idea."

He waited until Olivia said, "No . . . I haven't the least idea."

Cocking his head on one side and speaking with the air of having made a great discovery, he said, "Well, I think there's a woman mixed up in it."

She felt the blood mounting to her head, in spite of anything she could do. When she was able to speak, she asked, "Yes, and what am I to do?"

He moved a little nearer, still with the same air of confiding in her. "Well, this is my idea. Now, you're a friend of his . . . you'll understand. You see, the trouble is that it's some woman here in Durham . . . some swell, you see, like yourself. That's what makes it hard. He's had women before, but they were women out of the ward and it didn't make much difference. But this is different. He's all upset, and . . ." He hesitated for a moment. "Well, I don't like to say a thing like this about Michael, but I think his head is turned a little. That's a mean thing to say, but then we're all human, aren't we?"

"Yes," said Olivia softly. "Yes . . . in the end, we're all human . . . even swells like me." There was a twinkle of humor in her eye which for a moment disconcerted the little man.

"Well," he went on, "he's all upset about her and he's no good for anything. Now, what I thought was this . . . that you could find out who this woman is and go to her and persuade her to lay off him for a time . . . to go away some place . . . at least until the campaign is over. It'd make a difference. D'you see?"

He looked at her boldly, as if what he had been saying was absolutely honest and direct, as if he really had not the faintest idea who this woman was, and beneath a sense of

anger, Olivia was amused at the crude tact which had evolved this trick.

"There's not much that I can do," she said. "It's a preposterous idea . . . but I'll do what I can. I'll try. I can't promise anything. It lies with Mr. O'Hara, after all."

"You see, Mrs. Pentland, if it ever got to be a scandal, it'd be the end of him. A woman out of the ward doesn't matter so much, but a woman out here would be different. She'd get a lot of publicity from the sassiety editors and all. . . . That's what's dangerous. He'd have the whole church against him on the grounds of immorality."

While he was speaking, a strange idea occurred to Olivia—that much of what he said sounded like a strange echo of Aunt Cassie's methods of argument.

The horse had grown impatient and was pawing the road and tossing his head; and Olivia was angry now, genuinely angry, so that she waited for a time before speaking, lest she should betray herself and spoil all this little game of pretense which Mr. Gavin had built up to keep himself in countenance. At last she said, "I'll do what I can, but it's a ridiculous thing you're asking of me."

The little man grinned. "I've been a long time in politics, Ma'am, and I've seen funnier things than this. . . ." He put on his hat, as if to signal that he had said all he wanted to say. "But there's one thing I'd like to ask . . . and that's that you never let Michael know that I spoke to you about this."

"Why should I promise . . . anything?"

He moved nearer and said in a low voice, "You know Michael very well, Mrs. Pentland. . . . You know Michael *very* well, and you know that he's got a bad, quick temper. If he found out that we were meddling in his affairs, he might do anything. He might chuck the whole business

and clear out altogether. He's never been like this about a woman before. He'd do it just now. . . . That's the way he's feeling. You don't want to see him ruin himself any more than I do . . . a clever man like Michael. Why, he might be president one of these days. He can do anything he sets his will to, Ma'am, but he is, as they say, temperamental just now."

"I'll not tell him," said Olivia quietly. "And I'll do what I can to help you. And now I must go." She felt suddenly friendly toward Mr. Gavin, perhaps because what he had been telling her was exactly what she wanted most at that moment to hear. She leaned down from her horse and held out her hand, saying, "Good-morning, Mr. Gavin."

Mr. Gavin removed his hat once more, revealing his round, bald, shiny head. "Good-morning, Mrs. Pentland."

As she rode off, the little man remained standing in the middle of the road looking after her until she had disappeared. His eye glowed with the light of admiration, but as Olivia turned from the road into the meadows, he frowned and swore aloud. Until now he hadn't understood how a good politician like Michael could lose his head over any woman. But he had an idea that he could trust this woman to do what she had promised. There was a look about her . . . a look which made her seem different from most women; perhaps it was this look which had made a fool of Michael, who usually kept women in their proper places.

Grinning and shaking his head, he got into the Ford, started it with a great uproar, and set off in the direction of Boston. After he had gone a little way he halted again and got out, for in his agitation he had forgotten to close the hood.

From the moment she turned and rode away from Mr. Gavin, Olivia gave herself over to action. She saw that

there was need of more than mere static truth to bring order out of the hazy chaos at Pentlands; there must be action as well. And she was angry now, really angry, even at Mr. Gavin for his impertinence, and at the unknown person who had been his informant. The strange idea that Aunt Cassie or Anson was somehow responsible still remained; tactics such as these were completely sympathetic to them—to go thus in Machiavellian fashion to a man like Gavin instead of coming to her. By using Mr. Gavin there would be no scene, no definite unpleasantness to disturb the enchantment of Pentlands. They could go on pretending that nothing was wrong, that nothing had happened.

But stronger than her anger was the fear that in some way they might use the same tactics to spoil the happiness of Sybil. They would, she was certain, sacrifice everything to their belief in their own rightness.

She found Jean at the house when she returned, and, closing the door of the drawing-room, she said to him, "Jean, I want to talk to you for a moment . . . alone."

He said at once, "I know, Mrs. Pentland. It's about Sybil."

There was a little echo of humor in his voice that touched and disarmed her as it always did. It struck her that he was still young enough to be confident that everything in life would go exactly as he wished it. . . .

"Yes," she said, "that was it." They sat on two of Horace Pentland's chairs and she continued. "I don't believe in meddling, Jean, only now there are circumstances . . . reasons. . . ." She made a little gesture. "I thought that if really . . . really. . . ."

He interrupted her quickly. "I do, Mrs. Pentland. We've talked it all over, Sybil and I . . . and we're agreed. We love each other. We're going to be married."

Watching the young, ardent face, she thought, "It's a nice

face in which there is nothing mean or nasty. The lips aren't thin and tight like Anson's, nor the skin sickly and pallid the way Anson's has always been. There's life in it, and force and charm. It's the face of a man who would be good to a woman . . . a man not in the least cold-blooded."

"Do you love her . . . really?" she asked.

"I . . . I . . . It's a thing I can't answer because there aren't words to describe it."

"Because . . . well . . . Jean, it's no ordinary case of a mother and a daughter. It's much more than that. It means more to me than my own happiness, my own life . . . because, well, because Sybil is like a part of myself. I want her to be happy. It's not just a simple case of two young people marrying. It's much more than that." There was a silence, and she asked, "How do you love her?"

He sat forward on the edge of his chair, all eagerness. "Why . . ." he began, stammering a little, "I couldn't think of living without her. It's different from anything I ever imagined. Why . . . we've planned everything . . . all our lives. If ever I lost her, it wouldn't matter what happened to me afterwards." He grinned and added, "But you see . . . people have said all that before. There aren't any words to explain . . . to make it seem as different from anything else as it seems to me."

"But you're going to take her away?"

"Yes . . . she wants to go where I go."

("They are young," thought Olivia. "They've never once thought of any one else . . . myself or Sybil's grandfather.")

Aloud she said, "That's right, Jean. . . . I want you to take her away . . . no matter what happens, you must take her away. . . ." ("And then I won't even have Sybil.")

"We're going to my ranch in the Argentine."

"That's right. . . . I think Sybil would like that." She sighed, in spite of herself, vaguely envious of these two. "But you're so young. How can you know for certain."

A shadow crossed his face and he said, "I'm twenty-five, Mrs. Pentland . . . but that's not the only thing. . . . I was brought up, you see, among the French . . . like a Frenchman. That makes a difference." He hesitated, frowning for a moment. "Perhaps I oughtn't to tell. . . . You mightn't understand. I know how things are in this part of the world. . . . You see, I was brought up to look upon falling in love as something natural . . . something that was pleasant and natural and amusing. I've been in love before, casually . . . the way young Frenchmen are . . . but in earnest, too, because a Frenchman can't help surrounding a thing like that with sentiment and romance. He can't help it. If it were just . . . just something shameful and nasty, he couldn't endure it. They don't have affairs in cold blood . . . the way I've heard men talk about such things since I've come here. It makes a difference, Mrs. Pentland, if you look at the thing in the light they do. It's different here. . . . I see the difference more every day."

He was talking earnestly, passionately, and when he paused for a moment she remained silent, unwilling to interrupt him until he had finished.

"What I'm trying to say is difficult, Mrs. Pentland. It's simply this . . . that I'm twenty-five, but I've had experience with life. Don't laugh! Don't think I'm just a college boy trying to make you think I'm a roué. Only what I say is true. I know about such things . . . and I'm glad because it makes me all the more certain that Sybil is the only woman in the world for me . . . the one for whom I'd sacrifice everything. And I'll know better how to make her happy, to be gentle with her . . . to understand her. I've learned now, and it's a thing which needs learning . . .

the most important thing in all life. The French are right about it. They make a fine, wonderful thing of love." He turned away with a sudden air of sadness. "Perhaps I shouldn't have told you all this. . . . I've told Sybil. She understands."

"No," said Olivia, "I think you're right . . . perhaps." She kept thinking of the long tragic story of John Pentland, and of Anson, who had always been ashamed of love and treated it as something distasteful. To them it had been a dark, strange thing always touched by shame. She kept thinking, despite anything she could do, of Anson's clumsy, artificial attempts at love-making, and she was swept suddenly by shame for him. Anson, so proud and supercilious, was a poor thing, inferior even to his own groom.

"But why," she asked, "didn't you tell me about Sybil sooner? Every one has seen it, but you never spoke to me."

For a moment he did not answer her. An expression of pain clouded the blue eyes, and then, looking at her directly, he said, "It's not easy to explain why. I was afraid to come to you for fear you mightn't understand, and the longer I've been here, the longer I've put it off because . . . well, because here in Durham, ancestors, family, all that, seems to be the beginning and end of everything. It seems always to be a question of who one's family is. There is only the past and no future at all. And, you see, in a way . . . I haven't any family." He shrugged his big shoulders and repeated, "In a way, I haven't any family at all. You see, my mother was never married to my father. . . . I've no blood-right to the name of de Cyon. I'm . . . I'm . . . well, just a bastard, and it seemed hopeless for me even to talk to a Pentland about Sybil."

He saw that she was startled, disturbed, but he could not have known that the look in her eyes had very little to do with shock at what he had told her; rather she was thinking what

a weapon the knowledge would be in the hands of Anson and Aunt Cassie and even John Pentland himself.

He was talking again with the same passionate earnestness.

"I shan't let it make any difference, so long as Sybil will have me, but, you see, it's very hard to explain, because it isn't the way it seems. I want you to understand that my mother is a wonderful woman. . . . I wouldn't bother to explain, to say anything . . . except to Sybil and to you."

"Sabine has told me about her."

"Mrs. Callendar has known her for a long time. . . . They're great friends," said Jean. "She understands."

"But she never told me . . . that. You mean that she's known it all along?"

"It's not an easy thing to tell . . . especially here in Durham, and I fancy she thought it might make trouble for me . . . after she saw what had happened to Sybil and me."

He went on quickly, telling her what he had told Sybil of his mother's story, trying to make her understand what he understood, and Sabine and even his stepfather, the distinguished old de Cyon . . . trying to explain a thing which he himself knew was not to be explained. He told her that his mother had refused to marry her lover, "because in his life outside . . . the life which had nothing to do with her . . . she discovered that there were things she couldn't support. She saw that it was better not to marry him . . . better for herself and for him and, most of all, for me. . . . He did things for the sake of success—mean, dishonorable things—which she couldn't forgive . . . and so she wouldn't marry him. And now, looking back, I think she was right. It made no great difference in her life. She lived abroad . . . as a widow, and very few people—not more than two or three—ever knew the truth. *He* never told because, being

a politician, he was afraid of such a scandal. She didn't want me to be brought up under such an influence, and I think she was right. He's gone on doing things that were mean and dishonorable. . . . He's still doing them to-day. You see he's a politician . . . a rather cheap one. He's a Senator now and he hasn't changed. I could tell you his name. . . . I suppose some people would think him a distinguished man . . . only I promised her never to tell it. He thinks that I'm dead. . . . He came to her once and asked to see me, to have a hand in my education and my future. There were things, he said, that he could do for me in America . . . and she told him simply that I was dead . . . that I was killed in the war." He finished in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, his face alight with affection. "But you must know her really to understand what I've been saying. Knowing her, you understand everything, because she's one of the great people . . . the strong people of the world. You see, it's one of the things which it is impossible to explain—to you or even to Sybil—impossible to explain to the others. One must know her."

If she had had any doubts or fears, she knew now that it was too late to act; she saw that it was impossible to change the wills of two such lovers as Jean and Sybil. In a way, she came to understand the story of Jean's mother more from watching him than by listening to his long explanation. There must be in her that same determination and ardor that was in her son . . . a thing in its way irresistible. And yet it was difficult; she was afraid, somehow, of this unexpected thing, perhaps because it seemed vaguely like the taint of Savina Pentland.

She said, "If no one knows this, there is no reason to tell it here. It would only make unhappiness for all concerned. It is your business alone . . . and Sybil's. The others have no right to interfere, even to know; but they will try,

Jean . . . unless . . . unless you both do what you want . . . quickly. Sometimes I think they might do anything."

"You mean . . ." he began impatiently.

Olivia fell **back** upon that vague hint which John Pentland had dropped to her the night before. She said, "There was once an elopement in the Pentland family."

"You wouldn't mind that?" he asked eagerly. "You wouldn't be hurt . . . if we did it that way?"

"I shouldn't know anything about it," said Olivia quietly, "until it was too late to do anything."

"It's funny," he said; "we'd thought of that. We've talked of it, only Sybil was afraid you'd want to have a big wedding and all that. . . ."

"No, I think it would be better not to have any wedding at all . . . especially under the circumstances."

"Mrs. Callendar suggested it as the best way out. . . . She offered to lend us her motor," he said eagerly.

"You discussed it with her and yet you didn't speak to me?"

"Well, you see, she's different . . . she and Thérèse. . . . They don't belong here in Durham. Besides, she spoke of it first. She knew what was going on. She always knows. I almost think that she planned the whole thing long ago."

Olivia, looking out of the window, saw entering the long drive the antiquated motor with Aunt Cassie, Miss Peavey, her flying veils and her Pekinese.

"Mrs. Struthers is coming . . ." she said. "We mustn't make her suspicious. And you'd best tell me nothing of your plans and then . . . I shan't be able to interfere even if I wanted to. I might change my mind . . . one never knows."

He stood up and, coming over to her, took her hand and kissed it. "There's nothing to say, Mrs. Pentland . . . ex-

cept that you'll be glad for what you've done. You needn't worry about Sybil. . . . I shall make her happy. . . . I think I know how."

He left her, hurrying away past the ancestors in the long hall to find Sybil, thinking all the while how odd it would seem to have a woman so young and beautiful as Mrs. Pentland for a mother-in-law. She was a charming woman (he thought in his enthusiasm), a great woman, but she was so sad, as if she had never been very happy. There was always a cloud about her.

He did not escape quickly enough, for Aunt Cassie's sharp eyes caught a glimpse of him as he left the house in the direction of the stables. She met Olivia in the doorway, kissing her and saying, "Was that Sybil's young man I saw leaving?"

"Yes," said Olivia. "We've been talking about Sybil. I've been telling him that he mustn't think of her as some one to marry."

The yellow face of Aunt Cassie lighted with a smile of approval. "I'm glad, my dear, that you're being sensible about this. I was afraid you wouldn't be, but I didn't like to interfere. I never believe any good comes of it, unless one is forced to. He's not the person for Sybil. . . . Why, no one knows anything about him. You can't let a girl marry like that . . . just any one who comes along. Besides, Mrs. Pulsifer writes me. . . . You remember her, Olivia, the Mannering boy's aunt who used to have a house in Chestnut Street. . . . Well, she lives in Paris now at the Hotel Continental, and she writes me she's discovered there's some mystery about his mother. No one seems to know much about her."

"Why," said Olivia, "should she write you such a thing? What made her think you'd be interested?"

"Well, Kate Pulsifer and I went to school together and we still correspond now and then. I just happened to mention the boy's name when I was writing her about Sabine. She says, by the way, that Sabine has very queer friends in Paris and that Sabine has never so much as called on her or asked her for tea. And there's been some new scandal about Sabine's husband and an Italian woman. It happened in Venice. . . ."

"But he's not her husband any longer."

The old lady seated herself and went on pouring forth the news from Kate Pulsifer's letter; with each word she appeared to grow stronger and stronger, less and less yellow and worn.

("It must be," thought Olivia, "the effect of so many calamities contained in one letter.")

She saw now that she had acted only just in time and she was glad that she had lied, so flatly, so abruptly, without thinking why she had done it. For Mrs. Pulsifer was certain to go to the bottom of the affair, if for no other reason than to do harm to Sabine; she had once lived in a house on Chestnut Street with a bow-window which swept the entrance to every house. She was one of John Pentland's dead, who lived by watching others live.

4

From the moment she encountered Mr. Gavin on the turnpike until the tragedy which occurred two days later, life at Pentlands appeared to lose all reality for Olivia. When she thought of it long afterward, the hours became a sort of nightmare in which the old enchantment snapped and gave way to a strained sense of struggle between forces which,

centering about herself, left her in the end bruised and a little broken, but secure.

The breathless heat of the sort which from time to time enveloped that corner of New England, leaving the very leaves of the trees hanging limp and wilted, again settled down over the meadows and marshes, and in the midst of the afternoon appeared the rarest of sights—the indolent Sabine stirring in the burning sun. Olivia watched her coming across the fields, protected from the blazing sun only by the frivolous yellow parasol. She came slowly, indifferently, and until she entered the cool, darkened drawing-room she appeared the familiar bored Sabine; only after she greeted Olivia the difference appeared.

She said abruptly, "I'm leaving day after to-morrow," and instead of seating herself to talk, she kept wandering restlessly about the room, examining Horace Pentland's bibelots and turning the pages of books and magazines without seeing them.

"Why?" asked Olivia. "I thought you were staying until October."

"No, I'm going away at once." She turned and murmured, "I've hated Durham always. It's unbearable to me now. I'm bored to death. I only came, in the first place, because I thought Thérèse ought to know her own people. But it's no good. She'll have none of them. I see now how like her father she is. They're not her own people and never will be. . . . I don't imagine Durham will ever see either of us again."

Olivia smiled. "I know it's dull here."

"Oh, I don't mean you, Olivia dear, or even Sybil or O'Hara, but there's something in the air. . . . I'm going to Newport for two weeks and then to Biarritz for October. Thérèse wants to go to Oxford." She grinned sardonically. "There's a bit of New England in her, after all . . . this

education business. I wanted a *femme du monde* for a daughter and God and New England sent me a scientist who would rather wear flat heels and look through a microscope. It's funny how children turn out."

("Even Thérèse and Sabine," thought Olivia. "Even they belong to it.")

She watched Sabine, so worldly, so superbly dressed, so hard—such a restless nomad; and as she watched her it occurred to her again that she was very like Aunt Cassie—an Aunt Cassie in revolt against Aunt Cassie's gods, an Aunt Cassie, as John Pentland had said, "turned inside out."

Without looking up from the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue*, Sabine said, "I'm glad this thing about Sybil is settled."

"Yes."

"He told you about his mother?"

"Yes."

"You didn't let that make any difference? You didn't tell the others?"

"No. . . . Anything I had to say would have made no difference."

"You were wise. . . . I think Thérèse is right, perhaps . . . righter than any of us. She says that nature has a contempt for marriage certificates. Respectability can't turn decay into life . . . and Jean is alive. . . . So is his mother."

"I know what you are driving at."

"Certainly, my dear, you ought to know. You've suffered enough from it. And knowing his mother makes a difference. She's no ordinary light woman, or even one who was weak enough to allow herself to be seduced. Once in fifty years there occurs a woman who can . . . how shall I say it? . . . get away with a thing like that. You have to be a great woman to do it. I don't think it's made much difference in her life, chiefly because she's a woman of discre-

tion and excellent taste. But it might have made a difference in Jean's life if he had encountered a mother less wise than yourself."

"I don't know whether I'm being wise or not. I believe in him and I want Sybil to escape."

Olivia understood that for the first time they were discussing the thing which none of them ever mentioned, the thing which up to now Sabine had only touched upon by insinuation. Sabine had turned away and stood looking out of the window across the meadows where the distant trees danced in waves of heat.

"You spoiled my summer a bit, Olivia dear, by taking away my Irish friend from me."

Suddenly Olivia was angry as she was angry sometimes at the meddling of Aunt Cassie. "I didn't take him away. I did everything possible to avoid him . . . until you came. It was you who threw us together. That's why we're all in a tangle now." And she kept thinking what a strange woman Sabine Callendar really was, how intricate and unfathomable. She knew of no other woman in the world who could talk thus so dispassionately, so without emotion.

"I thought I'd have him to amuse," she was saying, "and instead of that he only uses me as a confidante. He comes to me for advice about another woman. And that, as you know, isn't very interesting. . . ."

Olivia sat suddenly erect. "What does he say? What right has he to do such a thing?"

"Because I've asked him to. When I first came here, I promised to help him. You see, I'm very friendly with you both. I want you both to be happy and . . . besides I can think of nothing happening which could give me greater pleasure."

When Olivia did not answer her, she turned from the

window and asked abruptly, "What are you going to do about him?"

Again Olivia thought it best not to answer, but Sabine went on pushing home her point relentlessly, "You must forgive me for speaking plainly, but I have a great affection for you both . . . and I . . . well, I have a sense of conscience in the affair."

"You needn't have. There's nothing to have a conscience about."

"You're not being very honest."

Suddenly Olivia burst out angrily, "And why should it concern you, Sabine . . . in the least? Why should I not do as I please, without interference?"

"Because, here . . . and you know this as well as I do . . . here such a thing is impossible."

In a strange fashion she was suddenly afraid of Sabine, perhaps because she was so bent upon pushing things to a definite solution. It seemed to Olivia that she herself was losing all power of action, all capacity for anything save waiting, pretending, doing nothing.

"And I'm interested," continued Sabine slowly, "because I can't bear the tragic spectacle of another John Pentland and Mrs. Soames."

"There won't be," said Olivia desperately. "My father-in-law is different from Michael."

"That's true. . . ."

"In a way . . . a finer man." She found herself suddenly in the amazing position of actually defending Pentlands.

"But not," said Sabine with a terrifying reasonableness, "so wise a one . . . or one so intelligent."

"No. It's impossible to say. . . ."

"A thing like this is likely to come only once to a woman."

("Why does she keep repeating the very things that I've

been fighting all along," thought Olivia.) Aloud she said, "Sabine, you must leave me in peace. It's for me alone to settle."

"I don't want you to do a thing you will regret the rest of your life . . . bitterly."

"You mean. . . ."

"Oh, I mean simply to give him up."

Again Olivia was silent, and Sabine asked suddenly. "Have you had a call from a Mr. Gavin? A gentleman with a bald head and a polished face?"

Olivia looked at her sharply. "How could you know that?"

"Because I sent him, my dear . . . for the same reason that I'm here now . . . because I wanted you to do something . . . to act. And I'm confessing now because I thought you ought to know the truth, since I'm going away. Otherwise you might think Aunt Cassie or Anson had done it . . . and trouble might come of that."

Again Olivia said nothing; she was lost in a sadness over the thought that, after all, Sabine was no better than the others.

"It's not easy to act in this house," Sabine was saying. "It's not easy to do anything but pretend and go on and on until at last you are an old woman and die. I did it to help you . . . for your own good."

"That's what Aunt Cassie always says."

The shaft went home, for it silenced Sabine, and in the moment's pause Sabine seemed less a woman than an amazing, disembodied, almost malevolent force. When she answered, it was with a shrug of the shoulders and a bitter smile which seemed doubly bitter on the frankly painted lips. "I suppose I *am* like Aunt Cassie. I mightn't have been, though. . . . I might have been just a pleasant normal person . . . like Higgins or one of the servants."

The strange speech found an echo in Olivia's heart. Lately the same thought had come to her again and again—if only she could be simple like Higgins or the kitchen-maid. Such a state seemed to her at the moment the most desirable thing in the world. It was perhaps this strange desire which led Sabine to surround herself with what Durham called "queer people," who were, after all, simply people like Higgins and the kitchen-maid who happened to occupy a higher place in society.

"The air here needs clearing," Sabine was saying. "It needs a thunderstorm, and it can be cleared only by acting. . . . This affair of Jean and Sybil will help. We are all caught up in a tangle of thoughts and ideas . . . which don't matter. . . . You can do it, Olivia. You can clear the air once and for all."

Then for the first time Olivia thought she saw what lay behind all this intriguing of Sabine; for a moment she fancied that she saw what it was Sabine wanted more passionately than anything else in the world.

Aloud she said it, "I could clear the air, but it would also be the destruction of everything."

Sabine looked at her directly. "Well? . . . and would you be sorry? Would you count it a loss? Would it make any difference?"

Impulsively she touched Sabine's hand. "Sabine," she said, without looking at her, "I'm fond of you. You know that. Please don't talk any more about this . . . please, because I want to go on being fond of you . . . and I can't otherwise. It's our affair, mine and Michael's . . . and I'm going to settle it, to-night perhaps, as soon as I can have a talk with him. . . . I can't go on any longer."

Taking up the yellow parasol, Sabine asked, "Do you expect me for dinner to-night?"

"Of course, more than ever to-night. . . . I'm sorry you've

decided to go so soon. . . . It'll be dreary without you or Sybil."

"You can go, too," said Sabine quickly. "There is a way. He'd give up everything for you . . . everything. I know that." Suddenly she gave Olivia a sharp look. "You're thirty-eight, aren't you?"

"Day after to-morrow I shall be forty!"

Sabine was tracing the design of roses on Horace Pentland's Savonnerie carpet with the tip of her parasol. "Gather them while you may," she said and went out into the blazing heat to cross the meadows to Brook Cottage.

Left alone, Olivia knew she was glad that day after to-morrow Sabine would no longer be here. She saw now what John Pentland meant when he said, "Sabine ought never to have come back here."

5

The heat clung on far into the evening, penetrating with the darkness even the drawing-room where they sat—Sabine and John Pentland and old Mrs. Soames and Olivia—playing bridge for the last time, and as the evening wore on the game went more and more badly, with the old lady forgetting her cards and John Pentland being patient and Sabine sitting in a controlled and sardonic silence, with an expression on her face which said clearly, "I can endure this for to-night because to-morrow I shall escape again into the lively world."

Jean and Sybil sat for a time at the piano, and then fell to watching the bridge. No one spoke save to bid or to remind Mrs. Soames that it was time for her shaking hands to distribute the cards about the table. Even Olivia's low, quiet voice sounded loud in the hot stillness of the old room.

At nine o'clock Higgins appeared with a message for Olivia—that Mr. O'Hara was being detained in town and that if

he could get away before ten he would come down and stop at Pentlands if the lights were still burning in the drawing-room. Otherwise he would not be down to ride in the morning.

Once during a pause in the game Sabine stirred herself to say, "I haven't asked about Anson's book. He must be near to the end."

"Very near," said Olivia. "There's very little more to be done. Men are coming to-morrow to photograph the portraits. He's using them to illustrate the book."

At eleven, when they came to the end of a rubber, Sabine said, "I'm sorry, but I must stop. I must get up early to-morrow to see about the packing." And turning to Jean she said, "Will you drive me home? Perhaps Sybil will ride over with us for the air. You can bring her back."

At the sound of her voice, Olivia wanted to cry out, "No, don't go. You mustn't leave me now . . . alone. You mustn't go away like this!" But she managed to say quietly, in a voice which sounded far away, "Don't stay too late, Sybil," and mechanically, without knowing what she was doing, she began to put the cards back again in their boxes.

She saw that Sabine went out first, and then John Pentland and old Mrs. Soames, and that Jean and Sybil remained behind until the others had gone, until John Pentland had helped the old lady gently into his motor and driven off with her. Then, looking up with a smile which somehow seemed to give her pain she said, "Well?"

And Sybil, coming to her side, kissed her and said in a low voice, "Good-by, darling, for a little while. . . . I love you. . . ." And Jean kissed her in a shy fashion on both cheeks.

She could find nothing to say. She knew Sybil would come back, but she would be a different Sybil, a Sybil who was a woman, no longer the child who even at eighteen some-

times had the absurd trick of sitting on her mother's knee. And she was taking away with her something that until now had belonged to Olivia, something which she could never again claim. She could find nothing to say. She could only follow them to the door, from where she saw Sabine already sitting in the motor as if nothing in the least unusual were happening; and all the while she wanted to go with them, to run away anywhere at all.

Through a mist she saw them turning to wave to her as the motor drove off, to wave gaily and happily because they were at the beginning of life. . . . She stood in the doorway to watch the motor-lights slipping away in silence down the lane and over the bridge through the blackness to the door of Brook Cottage. There was something about Brook Cottage . . . something that was lacking from the air of Pentlands: it was where Toby Cane and Savina Pentland had had their wanton meetings.

In the still heat the sound of the distant surf came to her dimly across the marshes, and into her mind came absurdly words she had forgotten for years . . . "The breaking waves dashed high on the stern and rockbound coast." Against the accompaniment of the surf, the crickets and katydids (harbingers of autumn) kept up a fiddling and singing; and far away in the direction of Marblehead she watched the eye of a lighthouse winking and winking. She was aware of every sight and sound and odor of the breathless night. It might storm, she thought, before they got into Connecticut. They would be motoring all the night. . . .

The lights of Sabine's motor were moving again now, away from Brook Cottage, through O'Hara's land, on and on in the direction of the turnpike. In the deep hollow by the river they disappeared for a moment and then were to be seen once more against the black mass of the hill crowned by the town burial-ground. And then abruptly they were gone,

leaving only the sound of the surf and the music of the crickets and the distant, ironically winking lighthouse.

She kept seeing them side by side in the motor racing through the darkness, oblivious to all else in the world save their own happiness. Yes, something had gone away from her forever. . . . She felt a terrible, passionate envy that was like a physical pain, and all at once she knew that she was terribly alone standing in the darkness before the door of the old house.

She was roused by the sound of Anson's voice asking, "Is that you, Olivia?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing out there?"

"I came out for some air."

"Where's Sybil?"

For a moment she did not answer, and then quite boldly she said, "She's ridden over with Jean to take Sabine home."

"You know I don't approve of that." He had come through the hall now and was standing near her.

"It can't do any harm."

"That's been said before. . . ."

"Why are you so suspicious, Anson, of your own child?" She had no desire to argue with him. She wanted only to be left in peace, to go away to her room and lie there alone in the darkness, for she knew now that Michael was not coming.

"Olivia," Anson was saying, "come inside for a moment. I want to talk to you."

"Very well . . . but please don't be disagreeable. I'm very tired."

"I shan't be disagreeable. . . . I only want to settle something."

She knew then that he meant to be very disagreeable, and she told herself that she would not listen to him; she would think of something else while he was speaking—a trick she had learned long ago. In the drawing-room she sat quietly and waited for him to begin. Standing by the mantelpiece, he appeared more tired and yellow than usual. She knew that he had worked on his book; she knew that he had poured all his vitality, all his being, into it; but as she watched him her imagination again played her the old trick of showing her Michael standing there in his place . . . defiant, a little sulky, and filled with a slow, steady, 'inexhaustible force.

"It's chiefly about Sybil," he said. "I want her to give up seeing this boy."

"Don't be a martinet, Anson. Nothing was ever gained by it."

(She thought, "They must be almost to Salem by now.") And aloud she added, "You're her father, Anson; why don't you speak?"

"It's better for you. I've no influence with her."

"I have spoken," she said, thinking bitterly that he could never guess what she meant.

"And what's the result? Look at her, going off at this hour of the night. . . ."

She shrugged her shoulders, filled with a warm sense of having outwitted the enemy, for at the moment Anson seemed to her an enemy not only of herself, but of Jean and Sybil, of all that was young and alive in the world.

"Besides," he was saying, "she hasn't proper respect for me . . . her father. Sometimes I think it's the ideas she got from you and from going abroad to school."

"What a nasty thing to say! But if you want the truth, I think it's because you've never been a very good father. Sometimes I've thought you never wanted children. You've never paid much attention to them . . . not even to Jack

. . . while he was alive. It wasn't ever as if they were *our* children. You've always left them to me . . . alone."

The thin neck stiffened a little and he said, "There are reasons for that. I'm a busy man. . . . I've given most of my time, not to making money, but to doing things to better the world in some way. If I've neglected my children it's been for a good reason . . . few men have as much on their minds. And there's been the book to take all my energies. You're being unjust, Olivia. You never could see me as I am."

"Perhaps," said Olivia. (She wanted to say, "What difference does the book make to any one in the world? Who cares whether it is written or not?") She knew that she must keep up her deceit, so she said, "You needn't worry, because Sabine is going away to-morrow and Jean will go with her." She sighed. "After that your life won't be disturbed any longer. Nothing in the least unusual is likely to happen."

"And there's this other thing," he said, "this disloyalty of yours to me and to all the family."

Stiffening slightly, she asked, "What can you mean by that?"

"You know what I mean."

She saw that he was putting himself in the position of a wronged husband, assuming a martyrdom of the sort which Aunt Cassie practised so effectively. He meant to be a patient, well-meaning husband and to place her in the position of a shameful woman; and slowly, with a slow, heavy anger, she resolved to circumvent his trick.

"I think, Anson, that you're talking nonsense. I haven't been disloyal to any one. Your father will tell you that."

"My father was always weak where women are concerned, and now he's beginning to grow childish. He's so old that he's beginning to forgive and condone anything." And then

after a silence he said, "This O'Hara. I'm not such a fool as you think, Olivia."

For a long time neither of them said anything, and in the end it was Olivia who spoke, striking straight into the heart of the question. She said, "Anson, would you consider letting me divorce you?"

The effect upon him was alarming. His face turned gray, and the long, thin, oversensitive hands began to tremble. She saw that she had touched him on the rawest of places, upon his immense sense of pride and dignity. It would be unbearable for him to believe that she would want to be rid of him in order to go to another man, especially to a man whom he professed to hold in contempt, a man who had the qualities which he himself did not possess. He could only see the request as a humiliation of his own precious dignity.

He managed to grin, trying to turn the request to mockery, and said, "Have you lost your mind?"

"No, Anson, not for a moment. What I ask is a simple thing. It has been done before."

He did not answer her at once, and began to move about the room in the deepest agitation, a strange figure curiously out of place in the midst of Horace Pentland's exotic, beautiful pictures and chairs and bibelots—as wrong in such a setting as he had been right a month or two earlier among the museum of Pentland family relics.

"No," he said again and again. "What you ask is preposterous! To-morrow when you are less tired you will see how ridiculous it is. No . . . I couldn't think of such a thing!"

She made an effort to speak quietly. "Is it because you don't want to put yourself in such a position?"

"It has nothing to do with that. Why should you want a divorce? We are well off, content, comfortable, happy. . . ."

She interrupted him, asking, "Are we?"

"What is it you expect, Olivia . . . to live always in a sort of romantic glow? We're happier than most."

"No," she said slowly. "I don't think happiness has ever meant much to you, Anson. Perhaps you're above such things as happiness and unhappiness. Perhaps you're more fortunate than most of us. I doubt if you have ever known happiness or unhappiness, for that matter. You've been uncomfortable when people annoyed you and got in your way, but . . . that's all. Nothing more than that. Happiness . . . I mean it in the sensible way . . . has sometimes to do with delight in living, and I don't think you've ever known that, even for a moment."

He turned toward her saying, "I've been an honest, God-fearing, conscientious man, and I think you're talking nonsense!"

"No, not for a moment. . . . Heaven knows I ought to know the truth of what I've been saying."

Again they reached an impasse in the conversation and again they both remained silent, disturbed perhaps and uneasy in the consciousness that between them they had destroyed something which could never be restored; and yet with Olivia there was a cold, sustained sense of balance which came to her miraculously at such times. She felt, too, that she stood with her back against a wall, fighting. At last she said, "I would even let you divorce me—if that would be easier for you. I don't mind putting myself in the wrong."

Again he began to tremble. "Are you trying to tell me that. . . ."

"I'm not telling you anything. There hasn't been anything at all . . . but . . . but I would give you grounds if you would agree."

He turned away from her in disgust. "That is even more impossible. . . . A gentleman never divorces his wife."

"Let's leave the gentlemen out of it, Anson," she said.

"I'm weary of hearing what gentlemen do and do not do. I want you to act as yourself, as Anson Pentland, and not as you think you ought to act. Let's be honest. You know you married me only because you had to marry some one . . . and I . . . I wasn't actually disreputable, even, as you remind me, if my father was shanty Irish. And . . . let's be just too. I married you because I was alone and frightened and wanted to escape a horrible life with Aunt Alice. . . . I wanted a home. That was it, wasn't it? We are both guilty, but that doesn't change the reality in the least. No, I fancy you practised loving me through a sense of duty. You tried it as long as you could and you hated it always. Oh, I've known what was going on. I've been learning ever since I came to Pentlands for the first time."

He was regarding her now with a fixed expression of horrid fascination; he was perhaps even dazed at the sound of her voice, slowly, resolutely, tearing aside all the veils of pretense which had made their life possible for so long. He kept mumbling, "How can you talk this way? How can you say such things?"

Slowly, terribly, she went on and on: "We're both guilty . . . and it's been a failure, from the very start. I've tried to do my best and perhaps sometimes I've failed. I've tried to be a good mother . . . and now that Sybil is grown and Jack . . . is dead, I want a chance at freedom. I'm still young enough to want to live a little before it is too late."

Between his teeth he said, "Don't be a fool, Olivia. . . . You're forty years old. . . ."

"You needn't remind me of that. To-morrow I shall be forty. I know it . . . bitterly. But my being forty makes no difference to you. To you it would be all the same if I were seventy. But to me it makes a difference . . . a great difference." She waited a moment, and then said, "That's

the truth, Anson; and it's the truth that interests me to-night. Let me be free, Anson. . . . Let me go while being free still means something."

Perhaps if she had thrown herself at his feet in the attitude of a wretched, shameful woman, if she had made him feel strong and noble and heroic, she would have won; but it was a thing she could not do. She could only go on being coldly reasonable.

"And you would give up all this?" he was saying. "You'd leave Pentlands and all it stands for to marry this cheap Irishman . . . a nobody, the son perhaps of an immigrant dock-laborer."

"He *is* the son of a dock-laborer," she answered quietly. "And his mother was a housemaid. He's told me so himself. And as to all this. . . . Why, Anson, it doesn't mean anything to me . . . nothing at all that I can't give up, nothing which means very much. I'm fond of your father, Anson, and I'm fond of you when you are yourself and not talking about what a gentleman would do. But I'd give it all up . . . everything . . . for the sake of this other thing."

For a moment his lips moved silently and in agitation, as if it were impossible for him to answer things so preposterous as those his wife had just spoken. At last he was able to say, "I think you must have lost your mind, Olivia . . . to even think of asking such a thing of me. You've lived here long enough to know how impossible it is. Some of us must make a stand in a community. There has never been a scandal, or even a divorce, in the Pentland family . . . never. We've come to stand for something. Three hundred years of clean, moral living can't be dashed aside so easily. . . . We're in a position where others look up to us. Can't you see that? Can't you understand such a responsibility?"

For a moment she had a terrible, dizzy, intoxicating sense of power, of knowing that she held the means of destroying

him and all this whitened structure of pride and respectability. She had only to begin by saying, "There was Savina Pentland and her lover. . . ." The moment passed quickly and at once she knew that it was a thing she could not do. Instead, she murmured, "Ah, Anson, do you think the world really looks at us at all? Do you think it really cares what we do or don't do? You can't be as blind as that."

"I'm not blind . . . only there's such a thing as honor and tradition. We stand for something. . . ."

She interrupted him. "For what?"

"For decency, for a glorious past, for stability . . . for endless things . . . all the things which count in a civilized community."

He really believed what he was saying; she knew that he must have believed it to have written all those thousands of dull, laborious words in glorification of the past.

He went on. "No, what you ask is impossible. You knew it before you asked. . . . And it would be a kindness to me if you never mentioned it again."

He was still pale, but he had gained control of himself and his hands no longer trembled; as he talked, as his sense of virtue mounted, he even grew eloquent, and his voice took on a shade of that unction which had always colored the voice of the Apostle to the Genteel and made of him a celebrated and fashionable cleric. Perhaps for the first time since his childhood, since the days when the red-haired little Sabine had mocked his curls and velvet suits, he felt himself a strong and powerful person. There was a kind of fierce intoxication in the knowledge of his power over Olivia. In his virtuous ardor he seemed for a moment to become a positive, almost admirable person.

At length she said quietly, "And what if I should simply go away . . . without bothering about a divorce?"

The remark shattered all his confidence once more; and

she knew that she had struck at the weakest point in all his defense—the fear of a scandal. “You wouldn’t do that!” he cried. “You couldn’t—you couldn’t behave like a common prostitute!”

“Loving one man is not behaving like a common prostitute. . . . I never loved any other.”

“You couldn’t bring such a disgrace on Sybil, even if you don’t care for the rest of us.”

(“He knew, then, that I couldn’t do such a thing, that I haven’t the courage. He knows that I’ve lived too long in this world.”) Aloud she said, “You don’t know me, Anson. . . . In all these years you’ve never known me at all.”

“Besides,” he added quickly, “he wouldn’t do such a thing. Such a climber isn’t likely to throw over his whole career by running away with a woman. You’d find out if you asked him.”

“But he *is* willing. He’s already told me so. Perhaps you can’t understand such a thing.” When he did not answer, she said ironically, “Besides, I don’t think a gentleman would talk as you are talking. No, Anson. . . . I don’t think you know what the world is. You’ve lived here always, shut up in your own little corner.” Rising, she sighed and murmured, “But there’s no use in talk. I am going to bed. . . . I suppose we must struggle on as best we can . . . but there are times . . . times like to-night when you make it hard for me to bear it. Some day . . . who knows . . . there’s nothing any longer to keep me. . . .”

She went away without troubling to finish what she had meant to say, lost again in an overwhelming sense of the futility of everything. She felt, she thought, like an idiot standing in the middle of an empty field, making gestures.

CHAPTER X

I

TOWARD morning the still, breathless heat broke without warning into a fantastic storm which filled all the sky with blinding light and enveloped the whole countryside in a wild uproar of wind and thunder, leaving the dawn to reveal fields torn and ravaged and strewn with broken branches, and the bright garden bruised and battered by hail.

At breakfast Anson appeared neat and shaven and smooth, as though there had been no struggle a few hours before in the drawing-room, as if the thing had made no impression upon the smooth surface which he turned toward the world. Olivia poured his coffee quietly and permitted him to kiss her as he had done every day for twenty years—a strange, cold, absent-minded kiss—and stood in the doorway to watch him drive off to the train. Nothing had changed; it seemed to her that life at Pentlands had become incapable of any change.

And as she turned from the door Peters summoned her to the telephone to receive the telegram from Jean and Sybil; they had been married at seven in Hartford.

She set out at once to find John Pentland and after a search she came upon him in the stable-yard talking with Higgins. The strange pair stood by the side of the red mare, who watched them with her small, vicious red eyes; they were talking in that curious intimate way which descended upon them at the mention of horses, and as she approached she was struck,

as she always was, by the fiery beauty of the animal, the pride of her lean head, the trembling of the fine nostrils as she breathed, the savagery of her eye. She was a strange, half-evil, beautiful beast. Olivia heard Higgins saying that it was no use trying to breed her . . . an animal like that, who kicked and screamed and bit at the very sight of another horse. . . .

Higgins saw her first and, touching his cap, bade her good-morning, and as the old man turned, she said, "I've news for you, Mr. Pentland."

A shrewd, queer look came into his eyes and he asked, "Is it about Sybil?"

"Yes. . . . It's done."

She saw that Higgins was mystified, and she was moved by a desire to tell him. Higgins ought to know certainly among the first. And she added, "It's about Miss Sybil. She married young Mr. de Cyon this morning in Hartford."

The news had a magical effect on the little groom; his ugly, shriveled face expanded into a broad grin and he slapped his thigh in his enthusiasm. "That's grand, Ma'am. . . . I don't mind telling you I was for it all along. She couldn't have done better . . . nor him either."

Again moved by impulse, she said, "So you think it's a good thing?"

"It's grand, Ma'am. He's one in a million. He's the only one I know who was good enough. I was afraid she was going to throw herself away on Mr. O'Hara. . . . But she ought to have a younger man."

She turned away from him, pleased and relieved from the anxiety which had never really left her since the moment they drove off into the darkness. She kept thinking, "Higgins is always right about people. He has a second sight." Somehow, of them all, she trusted him most as a judge.

John Pentland led her away, out of range of Higgins'

curiosity, along the hedge that bordered the gardens. The news seemed to affect him strangely, for he had turned pale, and for a long time he simply stood looking over the hedge in silence. At last he asked, "When did they do it?"

"Last night. . . . She went for a drive with him and they didn't come back."

"I hope we've been right . . ." he said. "I hope we haven't connived at a foolish thing."

"No. . . . I'm sure we haven't."

Something in the brilliance of the sunlight, in the certainty of Sybil's escape and happiness, in the freshness of the air touched after the storm by the first faint feel of autumn, filled her with a sense of giddiness, so that she forgot her own troubles; she forgot, even, that this was her fortieth birthday.

"Did they go in Sabine's motor?" he asked.

"Yes."

Grinning suddenly, he said, "She thought perhaps that she was doing us a bad turn."

"No, she knew that I approved. She did think of it first. She did propose it. . . ."

When he spoke again there was a faint hint of bitterness in his voice. "I'm sure she did. I only hope she'll stop her mischief with this. In any case, she's had a victory over Cassie . . . and that's what she wanted, more than anything. . . ." He turned toward her sharply, with an air of anxiety. "I suppose he'll take her away with him?"

"Yes. They're going to Paris first and then to the Argentine."

Suddenly he touched her shoulder with the odd, shy gesture of affection. "It'll be hard for you, Olivia dear . . . without her."

The sudden action brought a lump into her throat, and yet

she did not want to be pitied. She hated pity, because it implied weakness on her part.

"Oh," she said quickly, "they'll come back from time to time. . . . I think that some day they may come back here to live."

"Yes. . . . Pentlands will belong to them one day."

And then for the first time she remembered that there was something which she had to tell him, something which had come to seem almost a confession. She must tell him now, especially since Jean would one day own all of Pentlands and all the fortune.

"There's something I didn't tell you before," she began. "It's something which I kept to myself because I wanted Sybil to have her happiness . . . in spite of everything."

He interrupted her, saying, "I know what it is."

"You couldn't know what I mean."

"Yes; the boy told me himself. I went to him to talk about Sybil because I wanted to make sure of him . . . and after a time he told me. It was an honorable thing for him to have done. He needn't have told. Sabine would never have told us . . . never until it was too late."

The speech left her feeling weak and disconcerted, for she had expected anger from him and disapproval. She had been fearful that he might treat her silence as a disloyalty to him, that it might in the end shatter the long, trusting relationship between them.

"The boy couldn't help it," he was saying. "It's a thing one can't properly explain. But he's a nice boy . . . and Sybil was so set on him. I think she has a good, sensible head on her young shoulders." Sighing and turning toward her again, he added, "I wouldn't speak of it to the others . . . not even to Anson. They may never know, and if they don't what they don't know won't hurt them."

The mystery of him, it seemed, grew deeper and deeper

each time they talked thus, intimately, perhaps because there were in the old man depths which she had never believed possible. Perhaps, deep down beneath all the fierce reticence of his nature, there lay a humanity far greater than any she had ever encountered. She thought, "And I have always believed him hard and cold and disapproving." She was beginning to fathom the great strength that lay in his fierce isolation, the strength of a man who had always been alone.

"And you, Olivia?" he asked presently. "Are you happy?"

"Yes. . . . At least, I'm happy this morning . . . on account of Sybil and Jean."

"That's right," he said with a gentle sadness. "That's right. They've done what you and I were never able to do, Olivia. They'll have what we've never had and never can have because it's too late. And we've helped them to gain it. . . . That's something. I merely wanted you to know that I understood." And then, "We'd better go and tell the others. The devil will be to pay when they hear."

She would have gone away then, but an odd thought occurred to her, a hope, feeble enough, but one which might give him a little pleasure. She was struck again by his way of speaking, as if he were very near to death or already dead. He had the air of a very old and weary man.

She said, "There's one thing I've wanted to ask you for a long time." She hesitated and then plunged. "It was about Savina Pentland. Did she ever have more than one child?"

He looked at her sharply out of the bright black eyes and asked, "Why do you want to know that?"

She tried to deceive him by shrugging her shoulders and saying casually, "I don't know. . . . I've become interested lately, perhaps on account of Anson's book."

"You . . . interested in the past, Olivia?"

"Yes."

"Yes, she only had one child . . . and then she was

drowned when he was only a year old. He was my grandfather." Again he looked at her sharply. "Olivia, you must tell me the truth. Why did you ask me that question?"

Again she hesitated, saying, "I don't know . . . it seemed to me. . . ."

"Did you find something? Did *she*," he asked, making the gesture toward the north wing, "did *she* tell you anything?"

She understood then that he, marvelous old man, must even know about the letters. "Yes," she said in a low voice, "I found something . . . in the attic."

He sighed and looked away again, across the wet meadows. "So you know, too. . . . *She* found them first, and hid them away again. She wouldn't give them to me because she hated me . . . from our wedding-night. I've told you about that. And then she couldn't remember where she'd hid them . . . poor thing. But she told me about them. At times she used to taunt me by saying that I wasn't a Pentland at all. I think the thing made her mind darker than it was before. She had some terrible idea about the sin in my family for which she must atone. . . ."

"It's true," said Olivia softly. "There's no doubt of it. It was written by Toby Cane himself . . . in his own handwriting. I've compared it with the letters Anson has of his." After a moment she asked, "And you . . . you've known it always?"

"Always," he said sadly. "It explains many things. . . . Sometimes I think that those of us who have lived since have had to atone for their sin. It's all worked out in a harsh way, when you come to think of it. . . ."

She guessed what it was he meant. She saw again that he believed in such a thing as sin, that the belief in it was rooted deeply in his whole being.

"Have you got the letters, Olivia?" he asked.

"No . . . I burned them . . . last night . . . because I

was afraid of them. I was afraid that I might do something shameful with them. And if they were burned, no one would believe such a preposterous story and there wouldn't be any proof. I was afraid, too," she added softly, "of what was in them . . . not what was written there, so much as the way it was written."

He took her hand and with the oddest, most awkward gesture, kissed it gently. "You were right, Olivia dear," he said. "It's all they have . . . the others . . . that belief in the past. We daren't take that from them. The strong daren't oppress the weak. It would have been too cruel. It would have destroyed the one thing into which Anson poured his whole life. You see, Olivia, there are people . . . people like you . . . who have to be strong enough to look out for the others. It's a hard task . . . and sometimes a cruel one. If it weren't for such people the world would fall apart and we'd see it for the cruel, unbearable place it is. That's why I've trusted everything to you. That's what I was trying to tell you the other night. You see, Olivia, I know you . . . I know there are things which people like us can't do. . . . Perhaps it's because we're weak or foolish—who knows? But it's true. I knew that you were the sort who would do just such a thing."

Listening to him, she again felt all her determination slipping from her. It was a strange sensation, as if he took possession of her, leaving her powerless to act, imprisoning her again in that terrible wall of rightness in which he believed. The familiar sense of his strength frightened her, because it seemed a force so irresistible. It was the strength of one who was more than right; it was the strength of one who *believed*.

She had a fierce impulse to turn from him and to run swiftly, recklessly, across the wet meadows toward Michael,

leaving forever behind her the placid, beautiful old house beneath the elms.

"There are some things," he was saying, "which it is impossible to do . . . for people like us, Olivia. They are impossible because the mere act of doing them would ruin us forever. They aren't things which we can do gracefully."

And she knew again what it was that he meant, as she had known vaguely while she stood alone in the darkness before the figures of Higgins and Miss Egan emerged from the mist of the marshes.

"You had better go now and telephone to Anson. I fancy he'll be badly upset, but I shall put an end to that . . . and Cassie, too. She had it all planned for the Mannering boy."

2

Anson was not to be reached all the morning at the office; he had gone, so his secretary said, to a meeting of the Society of Guardians of Young Working Girls without Homes and left express word that he was not to be disturbed. But Aunt Cassie heard the news when she arrived on her morning call at Pentlands. Olivia broke it to her as gently as possible, but as soon as the old lady understood what had happened, she went to pieces badly. Her eyes grew wild; she wept, and her hair became all disheveled. She took the attitude that Sybil had been seduced and was now a woman lost beyond all hope. She kept repeating between punctuations of profound sympathy for Olivia in the hour of her trial, that such a thing had never happened in the Pentland family; until Olivia, enveloped in the old, perilous calm, reminded her of the elopement of Jared Pentland and Savina Dalgado and bade her abruptly to stop talking nonsense.

And then Aunt Cassie was deeply hurt by her tone, and Peters had to be sent away for smelling-salts at the very mo-

ment that Sabine arrived, grinning and triumphant. It was Sabine who helped administer the smelling-salts with the grim air of administering burning coals. When the old lady grew a little more calm she fell again to saying over and over again, "Poor Sybil. . . . My poor, innocent little Sybil . . . that this should have happened to her!"

To which Olivia replied at last, "Jean is a fine young man. I'm sure she couldn't have done better." And then, to soften a little Aunt Cassie's anguish, she said, "And he's very rich, Aunt Cassie . . . a great deal richer than many a husband she might have found here."

The information had an even better effect than the smelling-salts, so that the old lady became calm enough to take an interest in the details and asked where they had found a motor to go away in.

"It was mine," said Sabine dryly. "I loaned it to them."

The result of this statement was all that Sabine could have desired. The old lady sat bolt upright, all bristling, and cried, with an air of suffocation, "Oh, you viper! Why God should have sent me such a trial, I don't know. You've always wished us evil and now I suppose you're content! May God have mercy on your malicious soul!" And breaking into fresh sobs, she began all over again, "My poor, innocent little Sybil. . . . What will people say? What will they think has been going on!"

"Don't be evil-minded, Aunt Cassie," said Sabine sharply; and then in a calmer voice, "It will be hard on me. . . . I won't be able to go to Newport until they come back with the motor."

"You! . . . You! . . ." began Aunt Cassie, and then fell back, a broken woman.

"I suppose," continued Sabine ruthlessly, "that we ought to tell the Mannering boy."

"Yes," cried Aunt Cassie, reviving again. "Yes! There's the boy she ought to have married. . . ."

"And Mrs. Soames," said Sabine. "She'll be pleased at the news."

Olivia spoke for the first time in nearly half an hour. "It's no use. Mr. Pentland has been over to see her, but she didn't understand what it was he wanted to tell her. She was in a daze . . . only half-conscious . . . and they think she may not recover this time."

In a whisper, lost in the greater agitation of Aunt Cassie's sobs, she said to Sabine, "It's like the end of everything for him. I don't know what he'll do."

The confusion of the day seemed to increase rather than to die away. Aunt Cassie was asked to stay to lunch, but she said it was impossible to consider swallowing even a crust of bread. "It would choke me!" she cried melodramatically.

"It is an excellent lunch," urged Olivia.

"No . . . no . . . don't ask me!"

But, unwilling to quit the scene of action, she lay on Horace Pentland's Regence sofa and regained her strength a little by taking a nap while the others ate.

At last Anson called, and when the news was told him, the telephone echoed with his threats. He would, he said, hire a motor (an extravagance by which to gage the profundity of his agitation) and come down at once.

And then, almost immediately, Michael telephoned. "I have just come down," he said, and asked Olivia to come riding with him. "I must talk to you at once."

She refused to ride, but consented to meet him half-way, at the pine thicket where Higgins had discovered the fox-cubs. "I can't leave just now," she told him, "and I don't think it's best for you to come here at the moment."

For some reason, perhaps vaguely because she thought he might use the knowledge as a weapon to break down her will, she said nothing of the elopement. For in the confusion of the day, beneath all the uproar of scenes, emotions and telephone-calls, she had been thinking, thinking, thinking, so that in the end the uproar had made little impression upon her. She had come to understand that John Pentland must have lived thus, year after year, moving always in a secret life of his own, and presently she had come to the conclusion that she must send Michael away once and for all.

As she moved across the meadow she noticed that the birches had begun to turn yellow and that in the low ground along the river the meadows were already painted gold and purple by masses of goldenrod and ironweed. With each step she seemed to grow weaker and weaker, and as she drew near the blue-black wall of pines she was seized by a violent trembling, as if the sense of his presence were able somehow to reach out and engulf her even before she saw him. She kept trying to think of the old man as he stood beside her at the hedge, but something stronger than her will made her see only Michael's curly black head and blue eyes. She began even to pray . . . she (Olivia) who never prayed because the piety of Aunt Cassie and Anson and the Apostle to the Genteel stood always in her way.

And then, looking up, she saw him standing half-hidden among the lower pines, watching her. She began to run toward him, in terror lest her knees should give way and let her fall before she reached the shelter of the trees.

In the darkness of the thicket where the sun seldom penetrated, he put his arms about her and kissed her in a way he had never done before, and the action only increased her terror. She said nothing; she only wept quietly; and at last, when she had gained control of herself, she struggled free and said, "Don't, Michael . . . please don't . . . please."

They sat on a fallen log and, still holding her hand, he asked, "What is it? What has happened?"

"Nothing. . . . I'm just tired."

"Are you willing to come away with me? Now?" And in a low, warm voice, he added, "I'll never let you be tired again . . . never."

She did not answer him, because it seemed to her that what she had to tell him made all her actions in the past seem inexplicable and cheap. She was filled with shame, and tried to put off the moment when she must speak.

"I haven't been down in three days," he was saying, "because there's been trouble in Boston which made it impossible. I've only slept an hour or two a night. They've been trying to do me in . . . some of the men I always trusted. They've been double-crossing me all along and I had to stay to fight them."

He told her a long and complicated story of treachery, of money having been passed among men whom he had known and trusted always. He was sad and yet defiant, too, and filled with a desire to fight the thing to an end. She failed to understand the story; indeed she did not even hear much of it: she only knew that he was telling her everything, pouring out all his sadness and trouble to her as if she were the one person in all the world to whom he could tell such things.

And when he had finished he waited for a moment and then said, "And now I'm willing to chuck the whole dirty business and quit . . . to tell them all to go to hell."

Quickly she answered, "No, you mustn't do that. You can't do that. A man like you, Michael, daren't do such a thing. . . ." For she knew that without a battle life would mean nothing to him.

"No . . . I mean it. I'm ready to quit. I want you to go with me."

She thought, "He says this . . . and yet he stayed three

days and nights in Boston to fight!" She saw that he was not looking at her, but sitting with his head in his hands; there was something broken, almost pitiful, in his manner, and it occurred to her that perhaps for the first time he found all his life in a hopeless tangle. She thought, "If I had never known him, this might not have happened. He would have been able to fight without even thinking of me."

Aloud she said, "I can't do it, Michael. . . . It's no use. I can't."

He looked up quickly, but before he could speak she placed her hand over his lips, saying, "Wait, Michael, let me talk first. Let me say what I've wanted to say for so long. . . . I've thought. . . . I've done nothing else but think day and night for the past three days. And it's no good, Michael. . . . It's no good. I'm forty years old to-day, and what can I give you that will make up for all you will lose? Why should you give up everything for me? No, I've nothing to offer. You can go back and fight and win. It's what you like more than anything in the world . . . more than any woman . . . even me."

Again he tried to speak, but she silenced him. "Oh, I know it's true . . . what I say. And if I had you at such a price, you'd only hate me in the end. I couldn't do it, Michael, because . . . because in the end, with men like you it's work, it's a career, which is first. . . . You couldn't bear giving up. You couldn't bear failure. . . . And in the end that's right, as it should be. It's what keeps the world going."

He was watching her with a look of fascination in his eyes, and she knew—she was certain of it—that he had never been so much in love with her before; but she knew, too, from the shadow which crossed his face (it seemed to her that he almost winced) and because she knew him so well, that he recognized the truth of what she had said.

"It's not true, Olivia. . . . You can't go back on me now . . . just when I need you most."

"I'd be betraying you, Michael, if I did the other thing. It's not me you need half so much as the other thing. Oh, I know that I'm right. What you should have in the end is a young woman . . . a woman who will help you. It doesn't matter very much whether you're terribly in love with her or not . . . but a woman who can be your wife and bear your children and give dinner parties and help make of you the famous man you've always meant to be. You need some one who will help you to found a family, to fill your new house with children . . . some one who'll help you and your children to take the place of families like ours who are at the end of things. No, Michael . . . I'm right. . . . Look at me," she commanded suddenly. "Look at me and you'll know that it's not because I don't love you."

He was on his knees now, on the carpet of scented pine-needles, his arms about her while she stroked the thick black hair with a kind of hysterical intensity.

"You don't know what you're saying, Olivia. It's not true! It's not true! I'd give up everything. . . . I don't want the other thing. I'll sell my farm and go away from here forever with you."

"Yes, Michael, you think that to-day, just now . . . and to-morrow everything will be changed. That's one of the mean tricks Nature plays us. It's not so simple as that. We're not like Higgins and . . . the kitchen-maid . . . at least not in some ways."

"Olivia . . . Olivia, do you love me enough to. . . ."

She knew what he meant to ask. She thought, "What does it matter? Why should I not, when I love him so? I should be harming no one . . . no one but myself."

And then, abruptly, through the mist of tears she saw through an opening in the thicket a little procession crossing

the meadows toward the big house at Pentlands. She saw it with a terrible, intense clarity . . . a little procession of the gardener and his helper carrying between them on a shutter a figure that lay limp and still, and following them came Higgins on foot, leading his horse and moving with the awkward rolling gait which afflicted him when his feet were on the ground. She knew who the still figure was. It was John Pentland. The red mare had killed him at last. And she heard him saying, "There are some things which people like us, Olivia, can't do."

What happened immediately afterward she was never able to remember very clearly. She found herself joining the little procession; she knew that Michael was with her, and that there could be no doubt of the tragedy. . . . John Pentland was dead, with his neck broken. He lay on the shutter, still and peaceful, the bitter lines all melted from the grim, stern face, as he had been when she came upon him in the library smelling of dogs and woodsmoke and whisky. Only this time he had escaped for good. . . .

And afterward she remembered telling Michael, as they stood alone in the big white hall, that Sybil and Jean were married, and dismissing him by saying, "Now, Michael, it is impossible. While he was living I might have done it. . . . I might have gone away. But now it's impossible. Don't ask me. Please leave me in peace."

Standing there under the wanton gaze of Savina Pentland, she watched him go away, quietly, perhaps because he understood that all she had said was true.

3

In the tragedy the elopement became lost and forgotten.

Doctors came and went; even reporters put in an awkward appearance, eager for details of the death and the marriage in the Pentland family, and somehow the confusion brought peace to Olivia. They forgot her, save as one who managed everything quietly; for they had need just then of some one who did not break into wild spasms of grief or wander about helplessly. In the presence of death, Anson forgot even his anger over the elopement, and late in the afternoon Olivia saw him for the first time when he came to her helplessly to ask, "The men have come to photograph the portraits. What shall we do?"

And she answered, "Send them away. We can photograph ancestors any time. They'll always be with us."

Sabine volunteered to send word to Sybil and Jean. At such times all her cold-blooded detachment made of her a person of great value, and Olivia knew that she could be trusted to find them because she wanted her motor again desperately. Remembering her promise to the old man, she went across to see Mrs. Soames, but nothing came of it, for the old lady had fallen into a state of complete unconsciousness. She would, they told Olivia, probably die without ever knowing that John Pentland had gone before her.

Aunt Cassie took up her throne in the darkened drawing-room and there, amid the acrid smell of the first chrysanthemums of the autumn, she held a red-eyed, snuffling court to receive the calls of all the countryside. Again she seemed to rise for a time triumphant and strong, even overcoming her weakness enough to go and come from the gazeboed house on foot, arriving early and returning late. She insisted upon summoning Bishop Smallwood to conduct the services, and discovered after much trouble that he was attending a church conference in the West. In reply to her telegram she received only an answer that it was impossible for him to return, even if they delayed the funeral . . .

that in the rôle of prominent defender of the Virgin Birth he could not leave the field at a moment when the power of his party was threatened.

It seemed for a time that, as Sabine had hoped, the whole structure of the family was falling about them in ruins.

As for Olivia, she would have been at peace save that three times within two days notes came to her from Michael—notes which she sent back unopened because she was afraid to read them; until at last she wrote on the back of one, "There is nothing more to say. Leave me in peace." And after that there was only silence, which in a strange way seemed to her more unbearable than the sight of his writing. She discovered that two persons had witnessed the tragedy—Higgins, who had been riding with the old man, and Sabine, who had been walking the river path—walking only because Jean and Sybil had her motor. Higgins knew only that the mare had run off and killed his master; but Sabine had a strangely different version, which she recounted to Olivia as they sat in her room, the day after.

"I saw them," she said, "coming across the meadow. . . . Cousin John, with Higgins following. And then, all at once, the mare seemed to be frightened by something and began to run . . . straight in a line for the gravel-pit. It was a fascinating sight . . . a horrible sight . . . because I knew—I was certain—what was going to happen. For a moment Cousin John seemed to fight with her, and then all at once he leaned forward on her neck and let her go. Higgins went after him; but it was no use trying to catch her. . . . One might as well have tried to overtake a whirlwind. They seemed to fly across the fields straight for the line of elders that hid the pit, and I knew all the while that there was no saving them unless the mare turned. At the bushes the mare jumped . . . the prettiest jump I've ever seen a horse make, straight above the bushes into the open air. . . ."

For a moment Sabine's face was lighted by a macabre enthusiasm. Her voice wavered a little. "It was a horrible, beautiful sight. For a moment they seemed almost to rise in the air as if the mare were flying, and then all at once they fell . . . into the bottom of the pit."

Olivia was silent, and presently, as if she had been waiting for the courage, Sabine continued in a low voice, "But there's one thing I saw beyond any doubt. At the edge of the pit the mare tried to turn. She would have turned away, but Cousin John raised his crop and struck her savagely. There was no doubt of it. He forced her over the elders. . . ." Again after a pause, "Higgins must have seen it, too. He followed them to the very edge of the pit. I shall always see him there, sitting on his horse outlined against the sky. He was looking down into the pit and for a moment the horse and man together looked exactly like a centaur. . . . It was an extraordinary impression."

She remembered him thus, but she remembered him, too, as she had seen him on the night of the ball, slipping away through the lilacs like a shadow. Rising, she said, "Jean and Sybil will be back to-morrow, and then I'll be off for Newport. I thought you might want to know what Higgins and I knew, Olivia." For a moment she hesitated, looking out of the window toward the sea. And at last she said, "He was a queer man. He was the last of the great Puritans. There aren't any more. None of the rest of us believe anything. We only pretend. . . ."

But Olivia scarcely heard her. She understood now why it was that the old man had talked to her as if he were very near to death, and she thought, "He did it in a way that none would ever discover. He trusted Higgins, and Sabine was an accident. Perhaps . . . perhaps . . . he did it to keep me here . . . to save the thing he believed in all his life."

It was a horrible thought which she tried to kill, but it

lingered, together with the regret that she had never finished what she had begun to tell him as they stood by the hedge talking of the letters—that one day Jean might take the name of John Pentland. He had, after all, as much right to it as he had to the name of de Cyon; it would be only a little change, but it would allow the name of Pentland to go on and on. All the land, all the money, all the tradition, would go down to Pentland children, and so make a reason for their existence; and in the end the name would be something more than a thing embalmed in “The Pentland Family and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.” The descendants would be, after all, of Pentland blood, or at least of the blood of Savina Dalgado and Toby Cane, which had come long ago to be Pentland blood.

And she thought grimly, “He was right, after all. I am one of them at last . . . in spite of everything. It’s I who am carrying on now.”

On the morning of the funeral, as she stood on the terrace expecting Jean and Sybil, Higgins, dressed in his best black suit and looking horribly awkward and ill at ease, came toward her to say, looking away from her, “Mr. O’Hara is going away. They’re putting up a ‘For Sale’ sign on his gate. He isn’t coming back.” And then looking at her boldly he added, “I thought you might want to know, Mrs. Pentland.”

For a moment she had a sudden, fierce desire to cry out, “No, he mustn’t go! You must tell him to stay. I can’t let him go away like that!” She wanted suddenly to run across the fields to the bright, vulgar, new house, to tell him herself. She thought, “He meant, then, what he said. He’s given up everything here.”

But she knew, too, that he had gone away to fight, freed

now and moved only by his passion for success, for victory.

And before she could answer Higgins, who stood there wanting her to send him to Michael, Miss Egan appeared, starched and rigid and wearing the professional expression of solemnity which she adopted in the presence of bereaved families. She said, "It's about *her*, Mrs. Pentland. She seems very bright this morning and quite *in* her right mind. She wants to know why he hasn't been to see her for two whole days. I thought. . . ."

Olivia interrupted her quietly. "It's all right," she said. "I'll go and tell her. I'll explain. It's better for me to do it."

She went away into the house, knowing bitterly that she left Miss Egan and Higgins thinking of her with pity.

As she climbed the worn stair carpet to the north wing, she knew suddenly a profound sense of peace such as she had not known for years. It was over and done now, and life would go on the same as it had always done, filled with trickiness and boredom and deceits, but pleasant, too, in spite of everything, perhaps because, as John Pentland had said, "One had sometimes to pretend." And, after all, Sybil had escaped and was happy.

She knew now that she herself would never escape; she had been too long a part of Pentlands, and she knew that what the old man had said was the truth. She had acted thus not because of duty, or promises, or nobility, or pride, or even out of virtue. . . . Perhaps it was even because she was not strong enough to do otherwise. But she knew that she had acted thus because, as he said, "There are things, Olivia, which people like us can't do."

And as she moved along the narrow hall, she saw from one of the deep-set windows the figure of Sabine moving along the lane in a faint cloud of dust, and nearer at hand, at the entrance of the elm-bordered drive, Aunt Cassie in

deep black, coming along briskly in a cloud of crape. No, nothing had changed. It would go on and on. . . .

The door opened and the sickly odor of medicines flooded the hallway. Out of the darkness came the sound of a feeble, reed-like voice, terrible in its sanity, saying, "Oh, it's you, Olivia. I knew you'd come. I've been waiting for you. . . ."

THE END

Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island

June 4, 1925

St. Jean-de-Luz, B. P., France

July 21, 1926

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